

BOJIDAR DIMITROV

# SOZOPOL

A GUIDEBOOK  
OF HISTORY



АКШНАЕНА 2007



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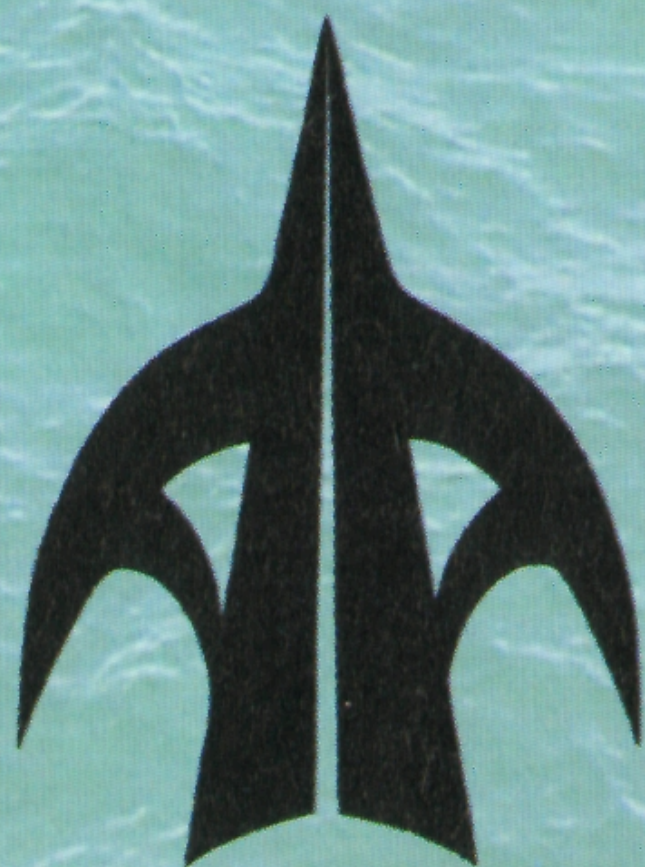
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**AKSHAENA-2007**

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# SOZOPOL FORT















## APOLLONIA

Sozopol from the air

Satellite picture of Sozopol

Silver coin of Apollonia  
(5th c. B.C.) Archaeological  
Museum of Sozopol



Historians believe that the first inhabitants of the territories round the today's town of Sozopol appeared about 6000 years ago. It is necessary to mention here that the level of the Black Sea in those times was 8-10 m lower and the shore of Sozopol differed considerably from what it is today. The Sozopol Peninsula was then an island, connected to the island Kirik and Yulita. The isthmus that today connects the Old town with the continent was formed after 5th c. B.C. when the citizens of the ancient town made a road of stone, which played the role of the present quays, accumulating sand on both sides. The present islands of St. Ivan and St. Peter were probably one formation. Between them and the shore there were probably two more islands, which existed till the 18th c. The local population called them Milos and Gata. Today they are destroyed by the sea.



A pre-historical dwelling in the port bay that existed between the 4th and 2nd millennium B.C. and is regrettably not well studied is the first settlement on the territory of Sozopol. It was probably a pile dwelling and as the hundreds of skulls of wild animals indicate, the inhabitants practiced hunting and fishing. Towards the end of its existence they were also occupied with farming. Numerous items of pottery show that even those primi-

tive people were not deprived of the feeling for beauty and refinement.

Archeological excavations on the hills round Sozopol and on the peninsula where the Old town is today show that in the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C. the territory of the present town was inhabited by people whose items of culture (ceramic vessels, weapons, jewelry, tools) are characteristic of the Thracians. According to the ancient Greek writers, during





the period described the Thracians already inhabited the territories of today's Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Northern Greece, the European Part of Turkey and part of Asia Minor. According to the ancient Greek historian Herodotus they are the most numerous people on earth after the Indians. The Thracians were divided into tribes ruled by kings who ruled over the territory of the tribe and its population.

Herodotus also gives us the name of the Thracian tribe that lived round Sozopol. They were called Skirmians. The tribal land of the Skirmians spread in the territories round Meden Hill – a mountain range separated from the Strandza Mountain, a catenary surrounding the sea coast from Cape Antia to Cape Maslen. Remains of walls of ancient Thracian fortresses built about 13-12 c. B.C. are found on almost all peaks







Sozopol from the air



of Meden Hill. Obviously the population along the coast and the planes around, practicing farming, animal breeding and fishing, retreated to the fortresses on the peaks of Meden Hill when threatened by their enemies. Meden Hill, by the way, had its important economic resources. Its slopes were, like today, covered with thick woods of oak. It contained copper that was excavated and processed as early as this period. The enormous quantities of slag that until recently stood in piles by the ancient mines indicate that the extraction of metal by the Skirmians greatly exceeded the needs of the tribe, who hardly numbered more than 15-20 000 people. A large part of the metal was exported. The destinations of the export are not difficult to guess. These are in the first place the Thracian tribes in the West, South and North of the Black Sea coast of Sozopol.

Deep water archeologists discovered in the second half of the 20th c. on the sea bottom at Sozopol





anchors made of stone belonging to Mediterranean people (Phoenicians, Cretans, Mycenaeans) of the 13-8 c. B.C. The commercial relations of the Thracians along what is today the Bulgarian Black Sea coast is a fact long known in history. They exported grain, hides, timber, dry and salted fish. But the large number of stone anchors, found near Sozopol, certify that the export also included goods that were not found in the other Thracian territories on the Black Sea. These could be only metal ingots in great quantities, produced by the Skirmians from Meden Hill.

Ancient writers claim that in 611 B.C. a group of settlers from the polis (town-state) of Millet in Asia Minor and the town of Phocaea founded a new

Sozopol - the Old Town from the air

Silver coin of Apollonia (5th c. B.C.)  
Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol

Copper coin - dolphin (5th c. B.C.)  
Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol







**Sozopol – View of the Old Town**

**Stone anchor (10th – 8th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol**

**Stone anchor (12th – 10th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol**

polis on today's Sozopol Peninsula. They called it Apollonia. The god Apollo had many functions. In Apollonia he was worshipped as a Healer (doctor). Ancient writers offer no additional details about the first decades of the new polis and about its relations with the local Thracians. The practice of founding a new polis is well known and it followed strict rules. Each decision for the foundation was approved or rejected by the Greek priestess Pythia, whose temple was in Delphi, not far from Athens. For example, one of the requirements set by her was that the settlers are not less than 800 and not more than 3000,







originating from the same polis. The last requirement probably tried to prevent civil riots in the new polis caused by differences in customs, traditions, dialects, etc. Though rarely, compromises were allowed and obviously the case of Apollonia was such a compromise. This means however that the initial group of settlers was not more than 800-1000 people. Having in mind that such a group of people cannot give more than 200 armed men, it is clear that the settlement of the Apollonians in the tribal territory of the Skirmian Thracians, whose army included several thousand well-armed men, was obviously performed in a peaceful way. Most probably following an agreement between the king of the Thracians and the leaders of the settlers, fastened by marriages between the sons

Amphoras (5th – 3rd c. B.C.)  
National Museum of History,  
Sofa

Stone anchor (10th – 8th c.  
B.C.) Arhaeological Museum  
of Sozopol

Stone schtock of anchor  
(8th-7th c. B.C.) Arhaeologi-  
cal Museum of Sozopol

Stone anchor (12th c. B.C.)  
Arhaeological Museum of  
Sozopol







**The Necropolis in the Harmanite**



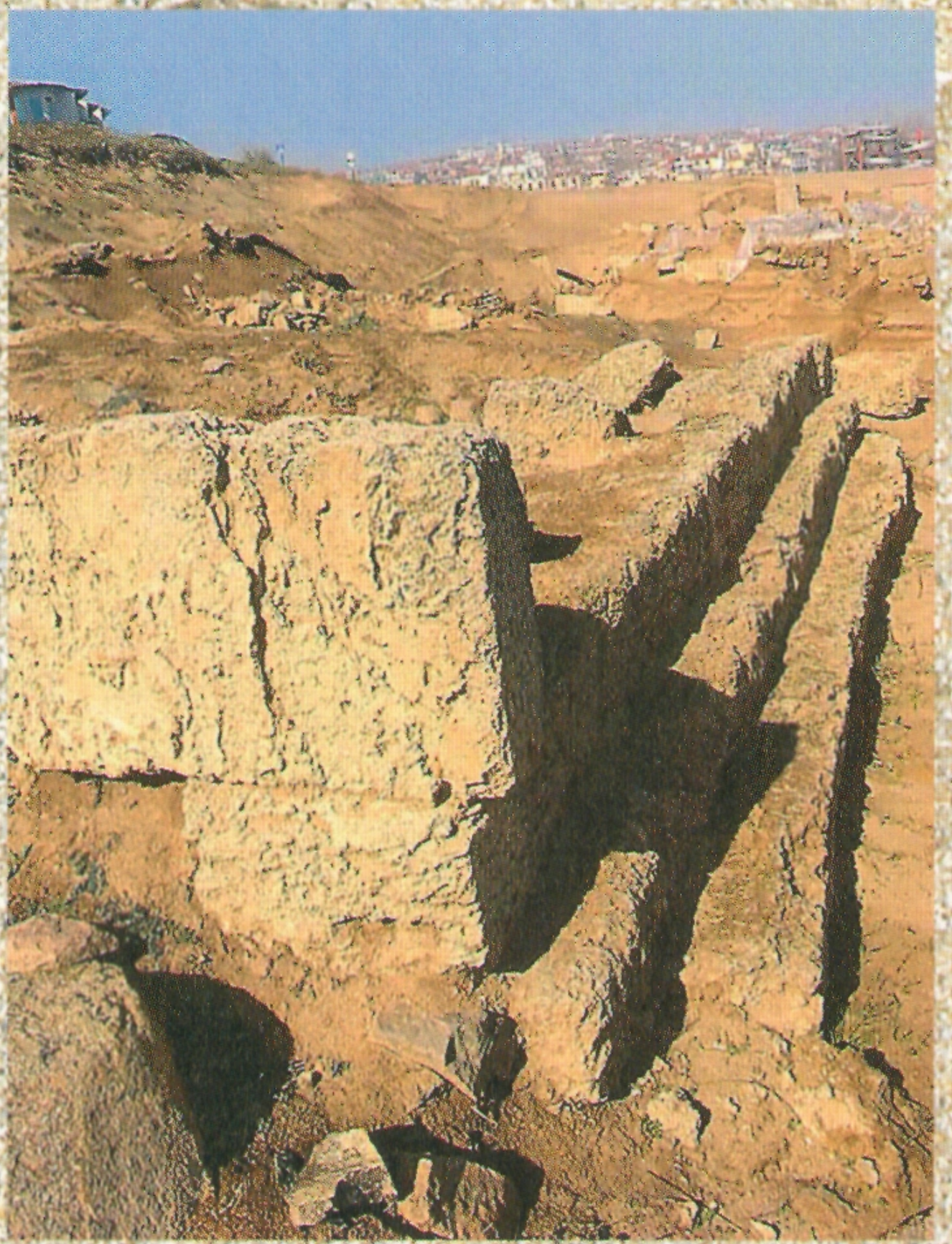
and the daughters of the Thracian and the Greeks nobles. Similar examples exist in the foundation of Greek polis settlements in the Gallipolis Peninsula and along the Aegean coast near Cavalla. Following their custom, the Thracians gave both their daughters and sons large dowry when married. The famous Greek historian Tucidit was the child of such a marriage and after being expelled from Athens, he found refuge in the estate of his grandmother, the Thracian Hegasapila, and lived on the income from the gold mine in the mountain of Pangei, which his grandmother had brought as dowry. Probably this was also the way in which the Thracian mines in Meden Hill gradually passed into the hands of citizens of Apollonia. To this certify the Thracian names of the wives of many Greeks on the tombstones in the ancient necropolis of the polis and the numerous Thracian burial mounds in



the neighborhood. Having in mind that the name Skirmians disappears from ancient sources as early as the 6th c. B.C., it is highly possible that all Skirmian Thracians acquired Apollonian citizenship by the beginning of the 5th c. B.C. Their lands became part of the state territory of Apollonia. The fact that Apollonia never had any troubles with the Thracians during its 600 years of existence as an independent polis indicates that this wise move of the notables of Apollonia secured their back



for many centuries to come. They hardly had any other choice, by the way. Their polis was rather far away from the Greek world to receive help in case of a military conflict with the Thracians, living by the walls of the polis. The Apollonians are the first Greek settlers along the Black Sea coast. Only after 100-150 years will appear Mesambria (Nessebar), Odesos (Varna), Bizone (Kavarna) and Dionisopol (Balchik). But they will long be only small and poor fishermen's settlements.



The Necropolis in the Harmanite







Red-figure hydria (5th c. B.C.) National Museum of History, Sofia

Bell-like red-figure crater (5th c. B.C.) National Museum of History, Sofia

Cover of lecan (5th c. B.C.) Archaeological Museum of Sozopol

The state structure of Apollonia followed the democratic model established in the mother-town of Milet and in most Greek polises. From inscriptions on stone, discovered by archeologists and from information found in the writings of ancient authors, it is clear that legislative power was executed by a People's Assembly, constituted by all adult citizens of the polis. The executive power was in the hands of the Council of the Archons, which is the analogue of modern governments. The term of office of the Council (Government) and the archons was one year. Every archon (they were ten) was responsible for a specific sector – army, religion, commerce, and so on. They had a small group of officials at their disposal. The election of a man for archon was great honor for the family and his kin and he often spent his own money for the sector for which he was responsible, in addition to the resources attributed by the state. It was a demonstration of good manners if the archon-polemarch (Minister of war) built a battleship with his own money or





the Minister of culture paid the tickets for the theater of the poor citizens.

Apollonia began its existence on a territory including only the Sozopol islands and the neighboring continental lands. But in the 5th c. B.C. it expanded acquiring the territory of the Skirmians (from Cape Atia along Meden Hill up to Cape Maslen) and the Bourgas coastline, reaching where the town of Pomorie is today. Here the Apollonians founded the town of Anhialo. To the south Apollonian territory reached, according to the ancient geographer Straboi, Cape Tiniada (today Ineada in Turkey), where they also founded a small town. Small Apollonian settlements were also established in Ahtopol, Kiten, Cape Maslen and Cape Atia. If the coastal settlements, including the capital on today's Sozopol Peninsula included about 10 000 people, and the former territory of the Skirmians had about 20 000, we must say that between 5th and 1st c. B.C. the population of the ancient polis had a population of 30 000. This was also the population of Athens at that time and



Red-figure lecyt (5th c. B.C.) National Museum of History, Sofia

Red-figure pelike (4th c. B.C.) Archaeological Museum of Sozopol

Red-figure ancient vessel (5th c. B.C.) Archaeological Museum of Sozopol

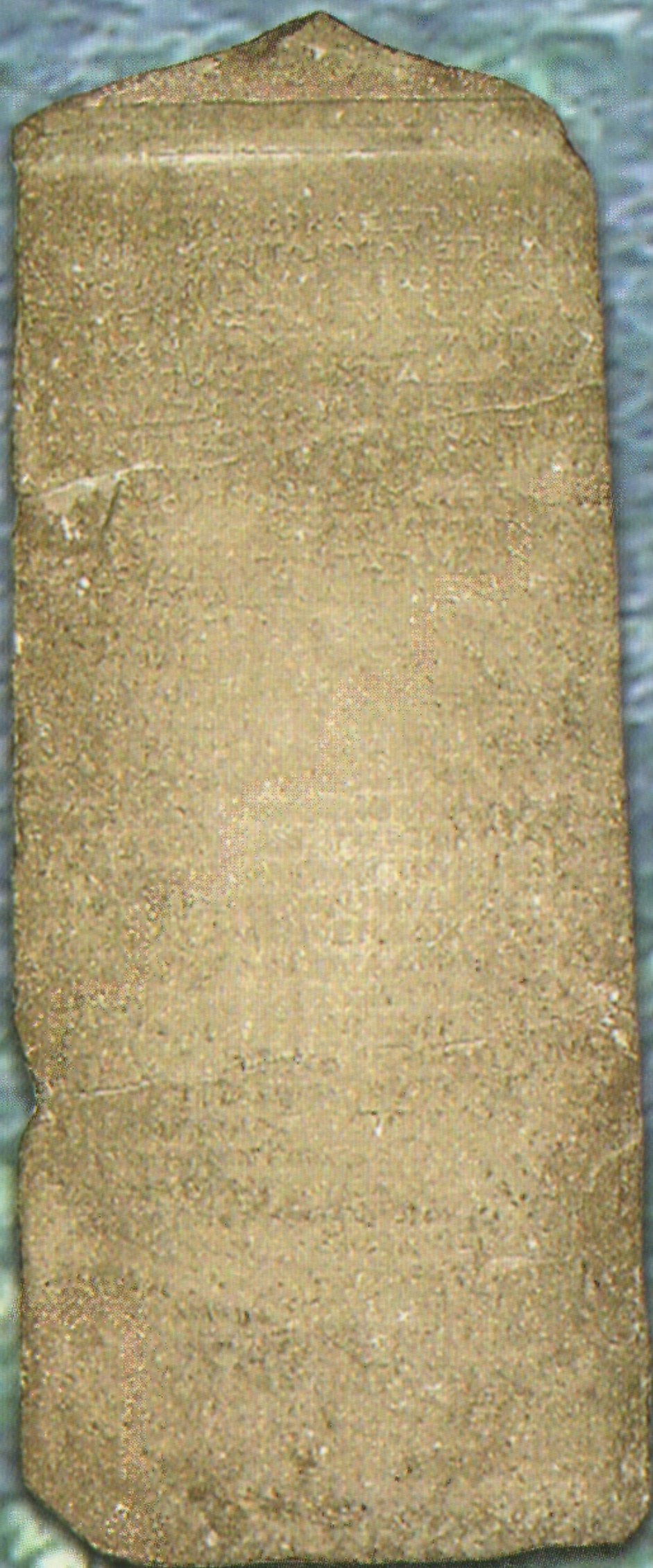






Decree of Apollonia (1st c. B.C.)  
Arhaeological Museum of  
Sozopol

Decree of Apollonia (3st c. B.C.)  
Arhaeological Museum of  
Sozopol



this is probably the reason why another ancient geographer, Polonius Mela, calls the Black Sea Apollonia Magna (big, great) in order to distinguish it from other towns in the ancient world bearing the same name.

In 5th c. B.C. Apollonia already mints its own coins of silver and copper. On one side of the Apollonian coins there is always the coat of arms of the town – an anchor. This is a beautiful symbol of the relation of the town to the sea, found by archeologists also on other articles of everyday life, until recently hidden in the ground – ceramics, scales, tiles.

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle tells in one of his books that in the first decades of its existence Apollonia was ruled by oligarchs. Probably the leaders of the settlers usurped all the power in the polis. But after a few decades the population of the town rose in rebellion and killed all the oligarchs. The practice in such cases was for an educated and wise man to make up the basic law of the state. The Apollonians called from Millet the Greek philosopher Anaximandre, famous in the Greek world. He is the founder of the materialistic school in philosophy. He accepted the invitation, arrived in Apollonia and made the basic law of the polis. Since Anaximandre was born in the year of the foundation of Apollonia, the rebellion against the oligarchs and the transition to democratic government must have been about 560-550 B.C.

The first decades in the history of Apollonia are hidden in darkness – ancient authors mention the town extremely rarely. It is Aristotle again who claims that there were some civil disturbances caused by the mixed origin of the population but they were soon ended. In 513 B.C. Apollonia was conquered by the Persian fleet during the march of Darius against the Scythians. But the Persian fleet was made up



primarily of ships from Greek towns in Asia Minor and the crews consisted of Greeks so that the Apollonian citizens were hardly affected by the attack. The people in Apollonia at that time made their living fishing, extraction copper from the mines in Meden Hill and trading in small goods. The commercial territories of Apollonian traders covered the lands about 40-50 km off the town. A sound proof of this are the arrow-coins (primitive unit of exchange), minted in Apollonia and found within this area. The tribal division in Thracian territories, the lack of roads and laws valid for the entire territory, banditism and the arbitrary acts of the numerous Thracian kings and aristocrats are the most probable reasons for Apollonian trade to operate only within the closest territories of the polis.

At the beginning of the 5th c. B.C. changes occur on the Balkan Peninsula and they are very favorable for the quick development and the flourish of Apollonia. The chief of the Thracian tribe Odrisses, Teres, manages to unite in one state all Thracian tribes on the territory of today's Bulgaria. The territories of today's Greece, on the other hand, are united into the so-called Athenian Marine Union, which includes, voluntarily or forcefully, 200 Greek polises. Both great states establish order and security on sea and land. Hellas badly needs food and raw materials, while Thrace needs the products of Greek craftsmen. The commercial exchange between Thrace and Hellas reaches tremendous amounts in a few years. Almost the whole traffic is by sea. This is the right moment for Apollonia. Along the Black Sea coast, from the mouth of the River Danube down to the Bosphorus, it is the only town that has a large port bay, naturally protected.



Pallas Athene, terracotta (5th c. B.C.)  
National Museum of History, Sofia

Marble head of Aphrodite, National  
Museum of History, Sofia

Eros riding a dolphin, marble (3rd c.  
B.C.) National Museum of History,  
Sofa







Ancient cup with the painting of a Thracian foot soldier (5th c. B.C.) Archaeological Museum of Sozopol



Black-figure alabastron (5th c. B.C.) Archaeological Museum of Sozopol



For that reason numerous carts, heavy loaded with grain, timber, hides, dried meat, and ingots of metal travel to Apollonia. They are loaded on hundreds of ships bringing from Hellas luxury ceramic and bronze vessels, weapons, fine textiles, furniture and even...books. All this is described by the Greek historian Polibius, who also adds the product of the Apollonians themselves – dried and salted fish. To the inside of the country the Apollonians exported salt, produced like it is still produced today in their small town of Anhialo (Pomorie). For the Thracians, who bred many animals, salt was in great demand and fairly expensive.

The finds of silver Apollonian coins minted in the 5-4 c. B.C. indicate the sphere of activity of Apollonian tradesmen. Apollonian coins are found in Upper Thrace, in the Bourgas plane, near Pazardzik. A curious fact is the abundance of Apollonian silver coins from 5-4 c. B.C. in northeastern Bulgaria and Romanian Dobrudza. There is no doubt that from these territories (today remaining the center of grain production in Bulgaria) Apollonian tradesmen bought great quantities of grain, eliminating the competition of the Greek polises situated there – Odesos (Varna), Bizone (Kavarna) and Dionisopolis (Balchik). The enormous scale of trade through the ports of Apollonia (goods were





also exported from the bays of Anhialo, Atia, Cape Maslen, Kiten and Ahtopol) is proved by the hundreds of lead schtocks (horizontal bars) of anchors, discovered by archeologists on the bottom of the sea. Bulgarian museums (in Sozopol, Bourgas, Sofia) possess the largest collection of these monuments of ancient sea faring in the world. A great part of them weigh about 200-400 kg and this shows that they had belonged to ships of 200 to 500 tons of displacement.

Following a stone inscription, discovered in Athens, Apollonia was also invited as participant in the Athenian Marine Union. This happened after an expedition of its war fleet in the Black Sea in 431 B.C., headed by the famous Athenian statesman Pericles. The Athenian Marine Union disintegrates after the Peloponnes War, which ended in the end of the 5th c. B.C. But sea trade continued and the volume of goods exchanged during the whole of the 4th c. even increased. The dramatic events in Hellas do not trouble life in Apollonia. Neither the internecine wars between Greek polises in Hellas in the 4th c. B.C. nor the conquering of Thrace by Philip II of Macedonia in the middle of the 4th c. bring any trouble to this town. According to ancient documents, Apollonia concluded an agreement with the king of Macedonia who

Black-figure lecyth (4th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol

Bell-like red-figure crater (5th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol

Red-figure alabastron (4th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol





**Tomb stone of an Apollonian  
(4th c. B.C.) Archaeological  
Museum of Sozopol**



**Tomb stone of an Apollonian**

**Urn (5rd c. B.C.) National  
Museum of History, Sofia**



guaranteed its independence. Apollonia never dared to plead before the king for condescension regarding the rebellious Greeks in the town of Istria. Istria was situated in today's Dobrudza, next to the southern canal of the Danube delta and Apollonia had several centuries of close relationships with this polis.

Following an inscription found in the town of Istria, dated from 2nd c. B.C., which is actually a decree of the People's Assembly of Apollonia and sent there to be placed in the Temple of Apollo there in an unknown year, Apollonia was facing a great disaster. According to the contents of the inscription Mesambria (Nessebar) attacked Apollonia treacherously and without declaring war. The Mesambrians took Anhialo (Pomorie), whose salt-works were probably the cause of the conflict. After that Mesambrians surrounded the town of Apollonia itself and desecrated the temple of Apollo, which was obviously situated outside the fortress walls –most probably on the today's island of St Ivan. The Apollonians asked Istria for help and it sent its war fleet under the commandment of Hegesagor, son of Monim. The united fleet of Apollonia and Istria sunk the fleet of Mesambria in a fierce battle. Hegesagor personally sunk one of the enemy's ships. After that the Apollonians, the Istrians and "the other allies" (under this phrase are probably hidden Thracians of the Strandza tribe of



Asti who had just founded a state of their own) landed in Anhialo and defeated the land army of Mesambria. By the stone inscription Apollonia expresses its gratitude for the help given and requires to be given a place in the central square of Istria where to situate a monument of the commander of the Istrian fleet Hegesagor. The monument was already produced in bronze and represented him “standing in full armament at the bow of a ship.”

The period between 4th and 1st c. B.C. was highly tumultuous for the Balkans. All great state formations disintegrated – that of the successors of Alexander of Macedonia, Thracian and Celtic kingdoms, unions of Greek polises. Their interests crossed, which was inevitable, and this brought wars among them. The war with Mesambria was hardly the only war in which Apollonia participated, but we have written documents only about it. A few tombstones dated between 4th and 2nd c. B.C., discovered in the necropolises in Apollonia, were built by the People’s Assembly in honor of the Apollonian soldiers who fell in the wars. This testifies of the numerous wars in the life of the town. We must bear in mind however that we are talking about monuments containing between three and seven names. This means that Apollonia took part in military clashes of a rather small scale, using its military force sparingly and coming out of them without big damages.

At the beginning of 1st c. B.C. the armies of



Urn (3rd c. B.C.) National Museum of History, Sofia



Urn (3rd c. B.C.) National Museum of History, Sofia





Ancient vessel (7th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol

attacked the town with two legions and after a short siege took it in one attack. Apollonia was burn to the ground, the fortress walls, the houses and administrative buildings were all destroyed. Apollonia was annexed to the Roman republic. An inscription cut on a marble piece and found in Sozopol informs that one of the survivals in the town, the Thracian Medoc Terul, restored with his own money the fortress walls, the administrative buildings and the Temple of Apollo. The citizens that survived restored their homes and in this way Apollonia was reborn

Ancient vessel (4th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol



the Roman republic, which consistently expanded its territory on the Balkans during the past decades at the expense of the Hellenistic, Macedonian, and Thracian kingdoms and the Greek polises, reached the Black Sea coast. A mighty coalition was formed against Rome, headed by the king of Pont (Hellenistic state with a center on the Crimean Peninsula), Mitridat VI Evpator. An inscription found in Sozopol indicates that Apollonia participated in the anti-Roman coalition and Mitridat VI sent a military detachment to the town lead by Epitinhanon. But in 72 the Roman military commander Marcus Lucul



Askos (6th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol

like the Phoenix bird from the ashes. But to the independence of the polis was put an end forever.

In the Roman republic and the empire between 72 B.C. and 330 A.D. Apollonia was a town situated in the extreme eastern periphery of the state. But the territories of the Eastern Mediterranean to which the Black Sea basin also belonged was an extremely active economic zone and Apollonia quickly restored its glory of a big sea port and a center of transportation of goods from and for Bulgarian territories. Roman authors describe





the town as one having a well-protected bay along the long western coast of the Black Sea. To aid the ships high stone lighthouses were built on the island of St. Ivan and at the entrance of the port. We learn about them from the remains of the lighthouses on the island and from a Dutch engraving of 1657 on which is depicted the lighthouse at the entrance of the port in the town itself. The building of the lighthouses was commemorated with a special jubilee coin.

In 330 the Roman Empire was divided into two. For a capital of the eastern part, known under the name of Byzantium, was chosen a small polis (Byzantion) at the entrance to the Bosphorus and it was called Constantinople. The town of 5000 citizens very soon had a population of 1 million. This large center needed enormous amounts of food, heating materials, raw materials. It was only 12 hours travel by sea from Apollonia with favorable winds. The amount of goods transported to Constantinople rose drastically since the sea transport even from places in the Bourgas lowlands and the Strandza Mountain was much faster and inexpensive than the roads, which took two weeks to reach Constantinople.

In 330 Apollonia changed its name and was called Sozopol. There is no doubt that the change of the name is related to the proclamation

Lecyt (3th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol

Ancient vessel (6th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol

Ancient vessel (5th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol







Terracotta (5th c. B.C.) National Museum of History, Sofia

of Christianity for the official and the only religion in the Roman Empire. The name Sozopol is a translation from Greek and means 'The saved town'. It is interesting that other towns of the name of Apollonia (in Asia Minor and in Lebanon) were also renamed to Sozopol. Obviously the pagan cult of Apollo was too strong in those towns and the adoption of Christianity (most probably forceful) was interpreted as a salvation (for the souls) of their citizens.

The data about Sozopol in the early Middle Ages are scarce. And yet we learn that the town was one of the large town centers of the Byzantine Empire. In 431 Sozopol is already mentioned as the seat of a bishopric – a privilege of large towns. In 513 the governor of Thrace Vitalian, who rose in rebellion in Kaliakra, conquered Sozopol capturing the Emperor's mission sent by ship to the Barbarians on the other side of the Danube, together with the 1100 liters of gold (72 000 gold coins) carried by them. From that moment on Sozopol is mentioned only in the bishopric lists of names of the Constantinople patriarchate. This confirms that the town was still a large civil and sea center. But no dramatic events occurred near it and for that reason for centuries it was absent from the chronicles of Byzantine authors. This continues till the appearance of the Bulgarian State, which sets in 681 its southern border along the ridges of the Balkan Mountains very close to Sozopol. As early as 705

Cover (4th c. B.C.) Archaeological Museum of Sozopol





Sozopol, as part of the Zagora region, that was given by Emperor Justinian II to the Bulgarian Khan Tervel, was included within the boundaries of Bulgaria. In 759, as a result of a battle not successful for the Bulgarians, Sozopol again became part of the territory of Byzantium.

Sozopol was part of Bulgaria for a longer period in 812 when the armies of the Bulgarian Khan Kroum conquered the town in the next war between Bulgaria and Byzantium. Probably his son Khan Omurtag (813-831) erected several marble columns in the capital Pliska and on each one he inscribed the name of the battle won by his father and the name of the town conquered. On one of the columns we read "Fortress Sozopol" and this is still another proof that the town occupied a leading position among the towns on Balkan territories. Another inscription-decree of Khan Kroum is discovered by the village of Malomir, Yambol district. It tells about the administrative organization of the newly conquered lands in Thrace. They were divided into three parts. For the southern Black Sea coast it is written: "For Anhialo, Debelt, Sozopol and Ranuli (a big fortress on Valchanovo Kale peak, by the mouth of Ropotamo River) the governor will be Kavkhan Iratais."

The Kavkhan is second in importance (after the Khan) in the Bulgarian state hierarchy. The fact that he was appointed governor of the four big Black Sea fortresses, among which is Sozopol, speaks of the great importance that the Bulgarian state attributed to this coastline, realizing its supreme importance for defense and trade in Bulgaria. In 969 Sozopol is again separated from Bulgaria to return in 1186, in the time of the uprising of the Bulgarian boyars Peter and Assen. In 1263 the town is again separated from Bulgaria but in 1304 it is liberated by king Svetoslav Terter. In the town the Bulgarian king found the former patriarch of Constantinople Jhon-Kozma. As a Bulgarian diplomat, he arranged the marriage of king Svetoslav and the Byzantine princess Theodora.



Apollo (6th c. B.C.) Archaeological Museum of Sozopol

Black-figure askos (5th c. B.C.) National Museum of History, Sofia

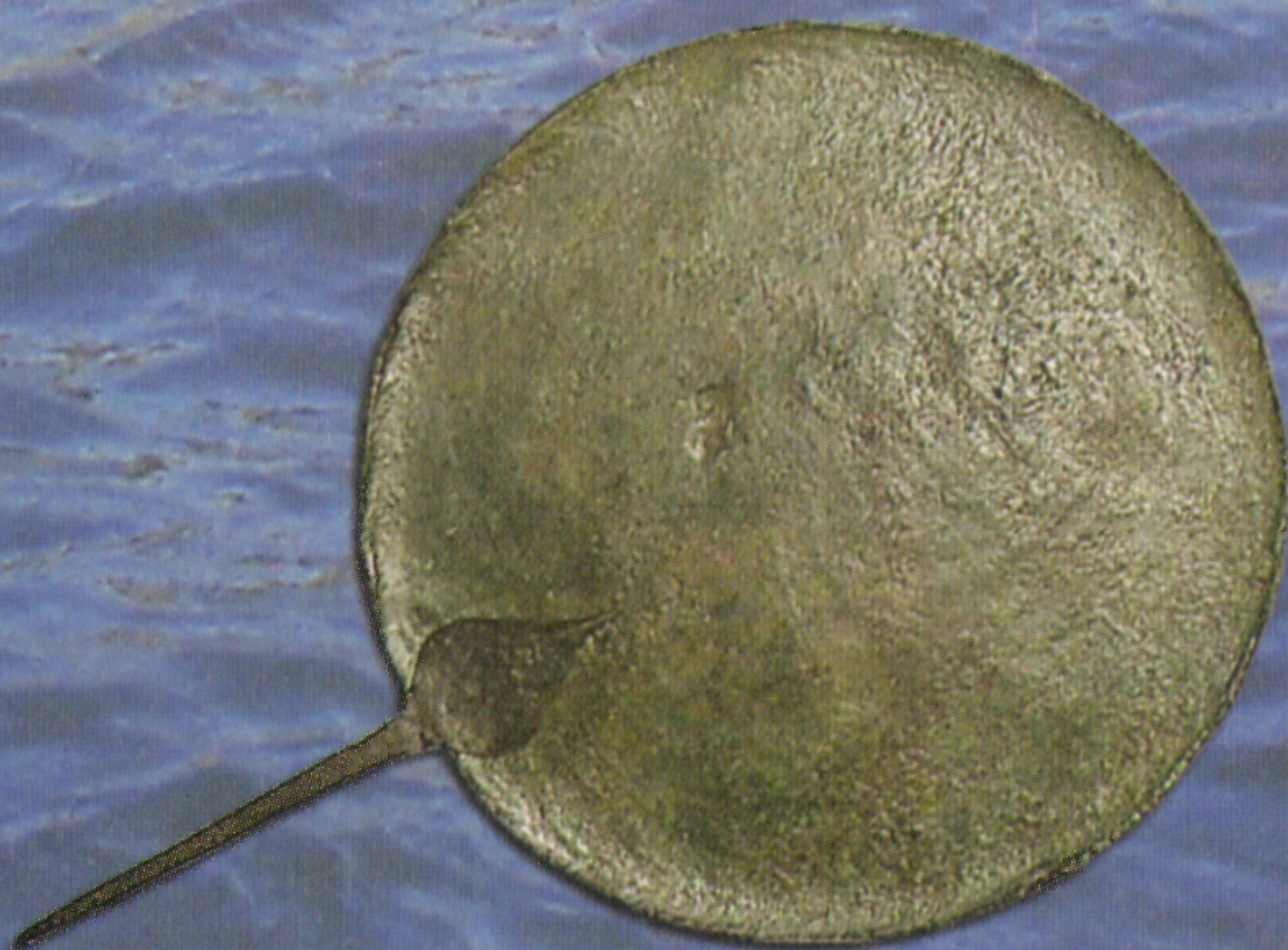






Terracotta (5th-4th c. B.C.)  
National Museum of History,  
Sofia

In the beginning of 14th c. in the Black Sea appear new rich commercial partners of Bulgaria – the Italian sea republics Venice and Genoa. The role of Sozopol as the major Bulgarian port on the Black Sea is stressed in several documents. On the numerous Italian sea maps Sozopol is always written in red ink – the color with which only big and secure ports were written. In 1315 the Senate of Genoa forbids the trade with Bulgarian ports. A fine threatens all citizens of Genoa who break this order. The veto is valid for all ports but stronger for Sozopol since the town brought large profits to the Bulgarian state. Sea trade and the crafts related to it – building and repair of ships – seem to have brought good profit to its citizens. The Byzantine writers Gregora and Cantakuzin write in their chronicles that Sozopol is “a town of many citizens and very rich.” This brought great disaster too.







In 1352 the town was suddenly attacked by a squadron from Genoa and conquered. The citizens were deprived of their property, the invaders destroyed even the walls of the houses, rummaging for hidden gold. Finally they captured a group of notables for whom the citizens paid an enormous ransom.

Fierce battles to rule Sozopol were fought between Bulgaria and Byzantium in the whole of 14th c. In 1326 Byzantium conquered it in a sudden military action. The Bulgarian king Michail Shishman in his turn conquered the town of Bucoleon near Ederne where the emperor's palaces were. Through negotiations the two towns were exchanged and Sozopol was returned to Bulgaria. In 1330, taking advantage of Michail Shishman's death, Byzantium again took Sozopol. But in 1331 the new Bulgarian king Ivan Alexander defeated the Byzantine army at the village of

Terracotta (5th-4th c. B.C.)  
National Museum of History,  
Sofa







Red-figure lecyth (4th c. B.C.)  
Arhaeological Museum of  
Sozopol

Red-figure lecyth (4th c. B.C.)  
Arhaeological Museum of  
Sozopol



Rusocastro, not far from Bourgas. At the news of the Bulgarian victory the population of Sozopol rose in rebellion and killed the Byzantine garrison. Sozopol was again Bulgarian. Thirty five years later Sozopol was taken by the fleet of a crusade under the command of the Italian count Amedeus of Savoy, who gave it over to Byzantium. The Bulgarian king Ivan Alexander agreed to end hostilities with Byzantium for the southern Black Sea towns against the sum of 180 000 florins. He needed the money to hire a Wallachian army and free the town of Vidin taken by the Hungarians. And he did it. Vidin was free after a heavy war in 1369 but Sozopol was under Byzantine rule. By the way this fact postponed the fall of Sozopol under Turkish rule. The Turks took Sozopol in April 1453 while the rest of the Bulgarian territory was entirely under Turkish rule in 1396.

Sozopol remained within the borders of the Ottoman Empire for 425 years. Almost to the middle of 19th c. it kept its position of the biggest port of Bulgaria. The tax registers show that between 15th and 19th c. the town had 600 Christian families, i.e. about 5000 people. No Muslims settled in Sozopol and the town preserved its Christian character. For comparison, during the same period towns like Sofia, Plovdiv, Turnovo, Vidin, Yambol had about 200 to 400 families. By the number of its Christian inhabitants Sozopol holds third position in Bulgarian territories, after Varna and Anhiolo.

The explanation of this seemingly strange fact was discovered not long ago, after analysis of newly found Turkish and Venetian documents. Immediately after the Ottoman Empire conquered the town the Christians in it fell into the privileged category of citizens. Part of the inhabitants of Sozopol were included in the lists as tax payers in the personal estate of the Turkish Sultan Bayazid II. No Muslims settled in the Sultan's property since this brought damage to the personal income of the Sultan. The rest of the citizens of Sozopol were included in the category with military duty. The military duty of those people of



Sozopol consisted in building 2-3 galleys for the Ottoman fleet. As ruled by law, the galleys were built between May 1 and September 1 and the quality materials were brought from different centers. The iron – for anchors, nails, clamps, etc. was brought from the town of Samokov, dry wood from the Rhodope Mountain, and so on. Venetian reconnaissance missions write with open sense of humor how the citizens of our Black Sea towns stole at least half of the materials that they needed for their own fishing and trading ships and replaced them with old and low quality materials.

Sea trade is still a serious source of profit both for the Ottoman Empire and the people of Sozopol. In 1454 the citizens of the town paid 80 000 achs (silver coins) as taxes. In the same time towns like Yambol and Sliven paid respectively 7000 and 8000 achs. Italian, French and Austrian reconnaissance missions describe the numerous scaffoldings (wooden port quays) from which was exported grain, lumber and charcoal, hides, livestock, fish. Ventzel von Bronyar claims in 1786 that the overall length of the scaffoldings in Sozopol was 2 miles, i.e. about 3.5 km.

The wealth of the town and its citizens passed in foreign hands at least once during that period. In 1623 Cossack pirates attacked the town with 17 ships and took it. The citizens were forced to hand over all their silver and gold. The churches and the monasteries were not spared – the Cossacks took away the gold and the silver ritual plates. After plundering Sozopol, the Cossack fleet headed for Nessebar, but all ships were sunk near the town by a sudden sea storm. The wreckages of the pirate ships and the valuable goods have not been found yet. A new catastrophe befell Sozopol in 1829. On February 16, in the heat of the Russian-Turkish War (military activities were taking place in Northern Bulgaria) a Russian squadron, commanded by Admiral Kumani, suddenly attacked and took the town after a short battle. The Russians decided to turn the town into a fortress in the rear of the Turks and bring their fleet into the quiet bay. On



Red-figure lecyt (4th c. B.C.)  
Arhaeological Museum of  
Sozopol



Red-figure lecyt (4th c. B.C.)  
Arhaeological Museum of  
Sozopol





Hydria (5th c. B.C.) Archaeological Museum of Sozopol

the hills where the quarters of Sozopol are built now, the Russians built their front line. A second front line was built at the beginning of the isthmus. The Turks sent a substantial force to take the town back but their attacks failed. The Russian garrison of 10 000 soldiers was joined by Bulgarian volunteers – 1000 people from Sozopol and the neighboring villages. They took active part in the battles during the five-month siege of the town. During the march of the Russians in Thrace in the summer of 1829 they had their independent fights at Sredetz, Zvezdetz, Tzarevo, Ahtopol and Maluk Samokov. After the end of the war, in accordance with the Ederne Peace Treaty, Sozopol, together with the whole of Bulgaria remained within the Ottoman Empire. Fearing repressions for their participation in the war on the side of the Russians, the citizens of Sozopol all emigrated to Russia. They were settled in the town of Feodosia on the Crimean Peninsula. Part of their descendents still live there and are known in our country under the name of Crimean Bulgarians.

The Turkish authorities kept the empty town for 2-3 years since they declared amnesty and hoped this will bring the citizens back. But realizing that this won't happen, they allowed Bulgarians from the Strandza region to settle in Sozopol. Surveys made in the 1880s show that the town was populated by families from Malko Turnovo, Kapovo, Zvezdetz, Vesselie, Rossen and other Strandza villages. There were also Greek fishermen from settlements near Istanbul and from the Aegean islands. Part of the Bulgarian families yielded to the Greeks as a result of the active policy of the bishopric, the priests and the Greek school, ruled by the Hellenized Ecumenical Patriarchate.

In 1878, the year of the Liberation, Sozopol had about 300 Greek and 130 Bulgarian families and the overall number of the population was 4408.

Red-figure askos (4th c. B.C.) Archaeological Museum of Sozopol







In the 1840s Sozopol lost its position of a large commercial port of the southern Bulgarians territories. Commercial operations of export and import in this geographical area were taken over by Bourgas within a few years only. Timber and charcoal was exported from the Sozopol quays for Istanbul till 1944, but the great trading business was over. The kilometers of wooden quays disappear in the middle of the 19th c.

Ancient cup (5th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol

Fishing remains the only occupation of the citizens of Sozopol and they reach perfection in this profession to become the best fishermen in the Black Sea. In 19th and the whole of 20th c. 90% of the catch in the Black Sea belongs to Sozopol fishermen, whose stationary installations (dalyans) cover the coastline from Pomorie to Ahtopol. In 1921 a Fishing School is opened in Sozopol, which prepares specialists for modern fishing ships.

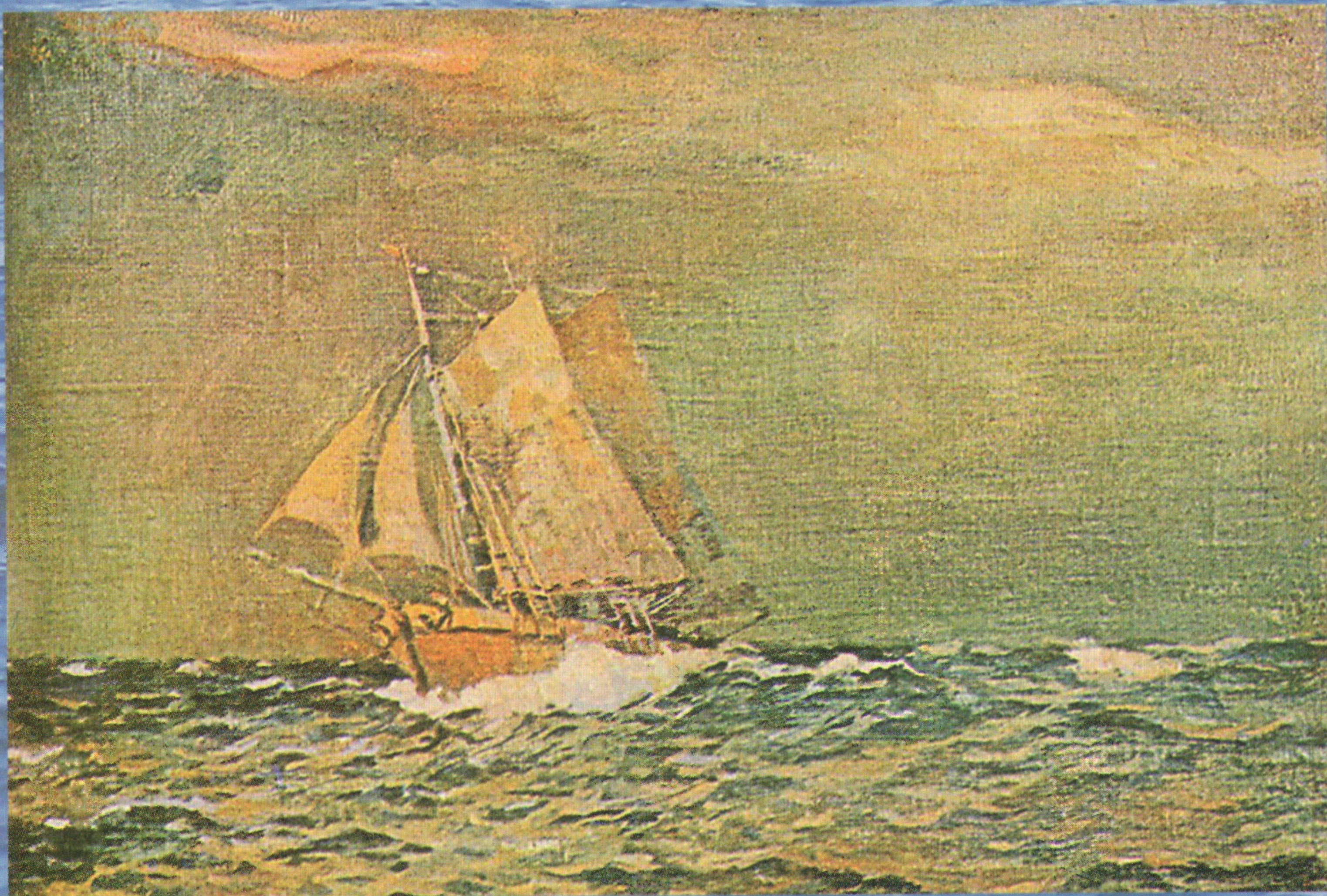
Black firnese vase (4th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol

The political events on the Balkans and the wars between Bulgaria and the other Balkan countries in the period 1912-1918 cause new changes in the ethnic composition of the town. The Greek population of Sozopol gradually migrates in the period 1878-1924 and only a few families remain. In 1913 217 families of refugees from the Thracian regions that remained

Bell-like red-figure crater (4th c. B.C.) Arhaeological Museum of Sozopol







**Commercial sailing ship (painter Mutaffov)**

**Schtock of anchor (3th-2th  
c. B.C.) National Museum of  
History, Sofa**

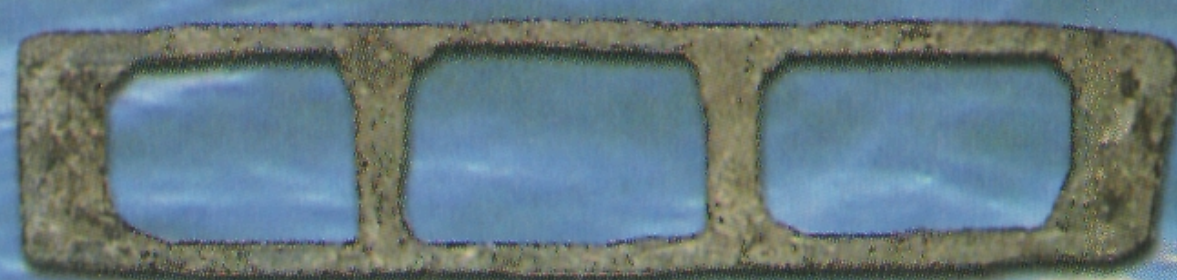




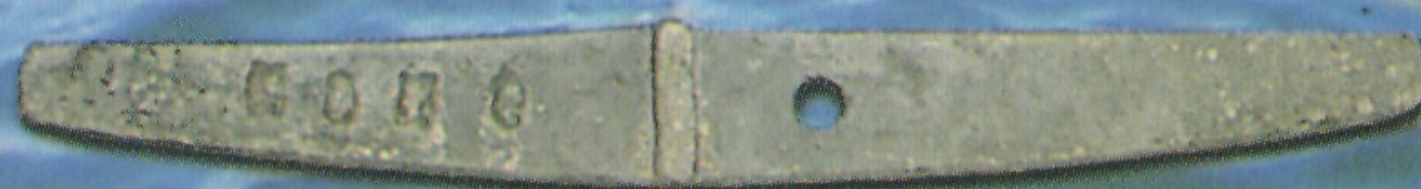
within Turkey and Greece are settled in Sozopol. Later other refugees arrive. After 1944 many families from the neighboring village of Ravadinovo and other villages near the town settle here.

In 1926 Sozopol is “opened” for summer tourism by the colonies of the Bulgarian Marine Union. In 1927 a port of stone and concrete is built and a breakwater connecting the Sozopol Peninsula with the island of Kirik. The breakwater made the vast Sozopol bay completely protected from the dangerous winds in the Black Sea. The port of Sozopol has been expanded several times for the needs of the fishing and military fleet, stationed in the town. International tourism gradually became the basic occupation of the population.

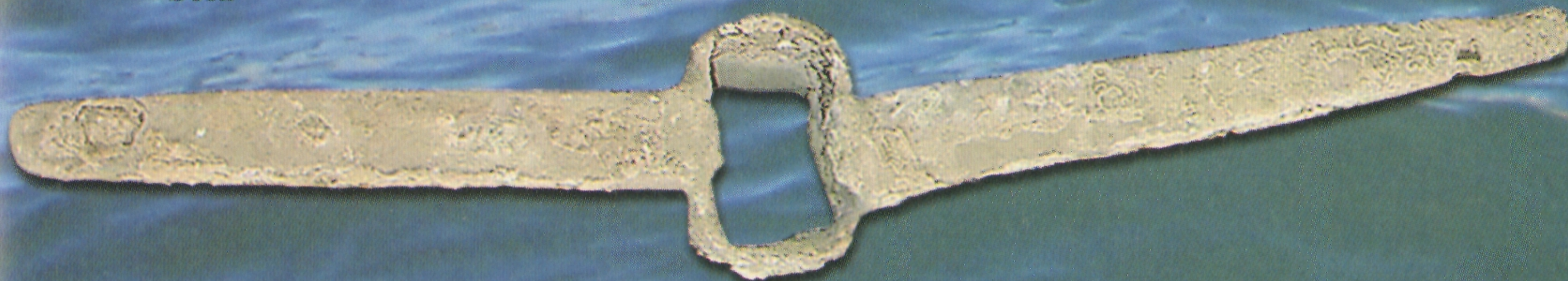
Schtock of anchor (2thc. B.C.)  
National Museum of History,  
Sofa



Schtock of anchor (3thc. B.C.)  
National Museum of History,  
Sofa



Schtock of anchor (2thc. B.C.)  
National Museum of History,  
Sofa











## LIFE IN ANCIENT APOLLONIA AND MEDIAEVAL SOZOPOL

The siege of Apollonia by the Romans in 72 B.C. (painter Katerkov)

Tower of Sozopol fort



Ancient Apollonia as a polis was founded by 800 settlers from Millet and Focea. The perfect structure of the Greek polises had one defect – the small territory and the high birth rate (7-12 children of whom 5-7 reached adulthood) soon caused overpopulation. Then the young people, left without land and without work (mainly young families), combined to found a new polis somewhere in the wide world. There was a set of legal requirements, valid for the entire Greek world and for the lack of a common Greek state compliance with these laws was supervised by the priestess Pythia in the Temple of Delfi. In addition to the requirement for at least 800 settlers (and not more than 3000), it was also required that the new place could provide conditions for subsistence and protection of the local population.









The position of Apollonia – a big island and well-meaning local population, near to fertile lands, ore deposits, rich fishing areas and two perfectly protected port bays, no doubt appealed to Pythia and she gave the permission needed. But the settlers had many difficulties during the first years. They had first of all to build a protective wall round the town against external attacks. The ancient fortress wall is not preserved except for its foundations, which are situated under a mediaeval fortress wall. We know from a note of the ancient writer Eneus that in periods of peace the doors of the fortress opened at dawn and closed in the evening at sunset. A hammer produced a deafening sound, which could be heard round the whole town. It announced that Apollonians, who were late, would have to sleep outside the fortress wall. Exceptions were not made for anyone since once a band of rascals entered the town together with a group of late arrivals.

The church St. George the Victor

Ikon of Mother of God Odigitria, end of the 15th-beginning of the 16th centuries, Sozopol









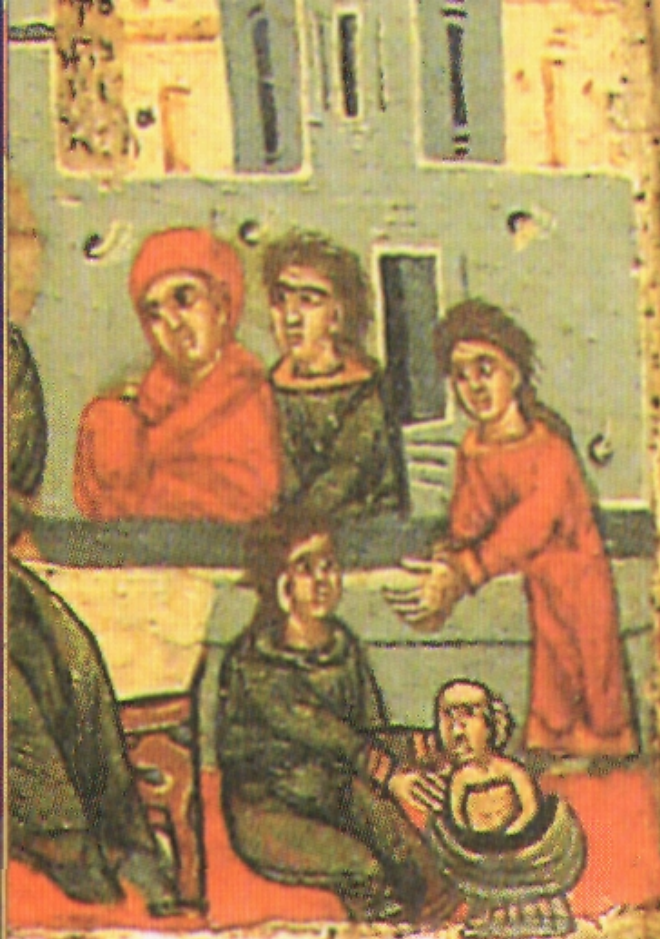
**The church St. Zosim  
(19th c.)**

**There are no excavations in the thickly populated Sozopol, except on small sites during the building of a new house. And yet they offer opportunities to establish the network of roads in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, which almost coincides with the present one. Houses had foundations of stone and the upper part was made of wood. They were covered with large flat tiles and a cornice of ceramics fortified with the head of Medusa – a deity that repelled evil from people's houses.**

**Probably in 5th c. B.C. Apollonia was connected by a stone road with the continent round which sand soon started to accumulate. This is how the today's isthmus was formed. But till the end of 19th c. the isthmus was only one meter above sea level and was covered with water in strong storms. After the Liberation the Sozopol Municipality ordered that building materials and everyday garbage be piled at the isthmus and in this way it was raised 2-3 meters**

**Ikon St. Anastasii (17thc.)  
Sozopol**









above sea level. In the 1920s a sand embankment was built and planted with shrubs on the side of the present town beach. It stopped the movement of the sand and expanded the beach, enlarging in this way the isthmus.

The appearance of an isthmus connecting Apollonia with the continent allowed the supply of the town with water by means of well-baked clay tubes. Two water-supply systems are discovered in the dunes near the Harmanite beach. They brought water from springs in the Korenyata and Kavatzite. There is also a supply system discovered on the northern slopes of the hill in the Old town. It must have brought water from an unknown spring on the slopes of Meden Hill. Till the construction of the supply systems, i.e. for 200 years, the Apollonians received water from deep wells cut into the rock of the peninsula. We don't know how the people of Apollonia discovered that mighty torrents of water from Strandza flow in

The church St. Mother of God

Ikon St. Nikola (17thc-18th), Sozopol





**The Hristos chapel**

**the caverns of the stone body of the Sozopol Peninsula. Archeologists have found such wells during the construction of the house of Rashko Maligarov, by the restaurant The Ancient Well and by the church St. George. After their cleaning one can draw clear water from them even today. The wells on the island of Kirik and Yulita and by the restaurant The Winery are also of ancient origin. The water of these wells however was hard – it is good for drinking and cooking but not for washing.**

**With the high birth rate in those times only after 50-60 years the descendants of the 800 settlers grew to 4000-5000. Having in mind that the Skirmian Thracians, who were officially declared citizens of Sozopol, or at least those who married Apollonians and moved to the town, it is obvious that as early as 5th c. B.C. (or even earlier) the Sozopol Peninsula became too small for its population. Then Apollonia in its turn started founding new settle-**



ments along the coast. They didn't have independent status and were constituent parts of the polis of Apollonia. These were, from north to south, Anhialo (Pomorie), Antea (Atia), Hersones (Cape Maslen), Urdoviza (Kiten), Avleuteihois (Ahtopol), Tiniada (Cape Iniada). Archeological expeditions show that in addition to these "small towns of Apollonia", surrounded by fortress walls, as they are called by the ancient authors (here we must also add the fortresses on Meden Hill), there were also many hidden villages and trading centers with permanent population. These are settlements in today's quarter Sladki Kladentzi ('sweet wells') in Bourgas, Cape Foros, Cape Talasakra, Cape Hristos near Kavatzite, Cape St. Dimitar in the mouth of the Ropotamo River, Primorsko, the Sinemoretz village, Cape Sili-star, Rezovo. In periods of peace in 50-4 c. B.C. some Apollonians built their houses outside the town walls. Dwellings of that period have been discovered near St. Marina and St. Ilia.

The town squares were decorated with statues of distinguished citizens made of bronze. Bronze statues of foreigners who had contributed to the town of Apollonia were also found there. Those were mainly military men who performed heroic deeds in the wars of Apollonia, in which they participated as allies. Such statues were sent by the Apollonian People's Assembly to the Black Sea polises Istria (today only ruins in the Danube delta), Kalatis (today Mangalia in Romania) and Bizone (Balchik).

The People's Assembly held its sessions in the Amphitheatre, which was obligatory for every respectable Greek



The chapel



The chapel





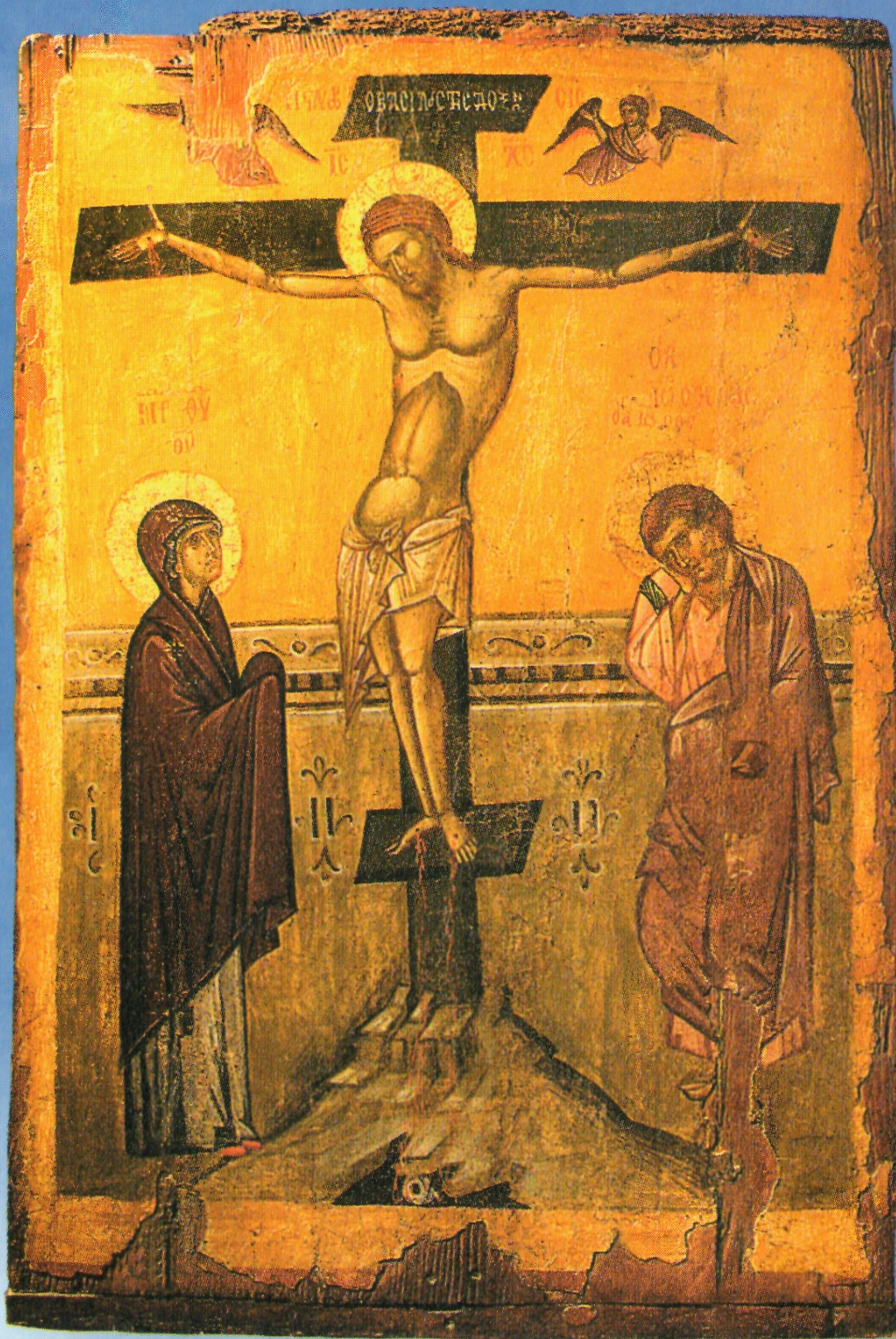
Ikon of Mother of God (14th c.), Sozopol

polis. Only adult males had the right to participate in it. According to Greek tradition women stayed at home, cared for the children, the kitchen and the house. To the market the wives went accompanied by their mothers-in-law or their mothers. At the age of ten male children started visiting school, called Gymnasion, where they studied grammar, literature, philosophy, rhetoric, and the art of war, of course. The ephebs (this is the name of the ancient

teenagers) pronounced an oath before the People's Assembly at the age of 18 and became true citizens with full rights.

Archeologists have not found the amphitheatre yet. No traces of the temples of the numerous ancient gods have been found too. It is known that the temple of the patron-god Apollo was on the island of St. Ivan, the temple of the Great mother-goddess in the area called St. Marina. The temple of





Ikon of Jesus Crucified, 15 th century, Sozopol

the Thracian horseman was in the place where the Christian church St. George is today. But we don't know the place of the temple of Dionysus – the Thracian god of wine, mentioned in inscriptions from the Black Sea region. It is not possible that a town with so many sailors and fishermen had no temple of their patron, the god Poseidon. It is possible that, like the temples of Apollo and the Great mother-goddess, they were built out-

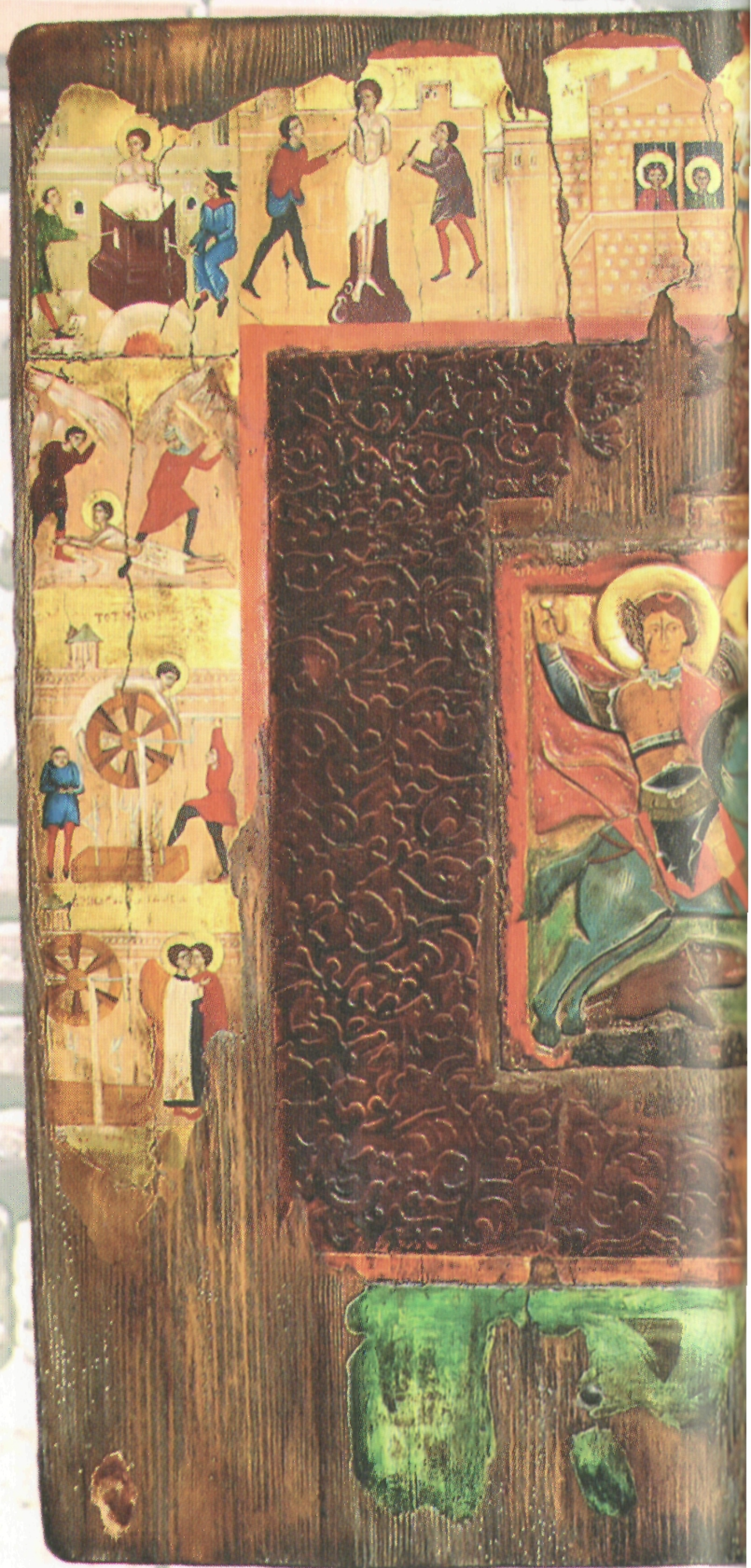
side the fortress walls of the town.

Life in the town began at sunrise. If there were no important debates on a law or a political decision in the People's Assembly, the craftsmen started for their workshops, hundreds of sailors, fishermen and dockers started for the port. The elders started for the vineyards near the town. Today too only grapes grow well on the sandy and rocky hills round Sozopol. Hundreds of the men were absent



from the town – they served as sailors on trading ships that transported goods to and from the towns of the Aegean Sea – Athens, the island of Rhodos, the island of Kos, the island of Tassos were among the most active partners of Apollonia in the period 7-1 c. B.C. Some of the sailors returned bringing a wife. On the tombstone set in the church St. Zosim it is written that the Apollonia sailor brought a wife from the town of Amphipolis (today ruins near the town of Kabala). Others worked at the fishing installations by Cape Maslen or in the mines and the processing installations on the peaks of Meden Hill. Generally speaking, Apollonia could hardly gather the capable men, who made up the town's army. This was risky in event of a sudden attack from a weaker but close enemy. This is what happened in 2nd c. B.C. when the much weaker Greek polis Mesambria (Nessebar) attacked the town, "treacherously and without declaring war", as is written in a decree of the Apollonian People's Assembly found in Istria. Apollonia lost its small town of Anhialo and today's island of St. Ivan. But the soldiers summoned from the men present in the besieged town managed to defend it. In the following days however Apollonia gathered its men, called also the fleet of its ally Istria and defeated the invaders, taking back the conquered territories.

The rhythm of the town didn't change much after it was burned down in 72 B.C. The Apollonians quickly restored the houses, the temples, and the infrastructure of the town. In the period of Roman rule still another acquisition of civilization was added – an underground canal – a collector of the dirty water. The







Ikon St. Georgi and St. Dimitar (15thc.), Sozopol

canal is built with stone walls and an arch of brick. It is 2 meters high. The dirty water is emptied into the port bay. The population of Sozopol knows this canal as Gorunotripa (from Greek 'pig's hollow'). The local legend has it that when the town was invaded by the Turks in 1453 the population took refuge in the canal and covered the entrances. But a pig entered and thus disclosed the entranced for the Turks. They entered through it and killed all the people hiding there. The Romans also built lighthouses at the entrances of the town port and on St. Ivan island. Romans again built, as we can judge from a print of Sozopol of 1657, a column with a spiral relief, similar to Trajan's column in Rome – no doubt in honor of a military victory achieved near the town against an unknown enemy in the beginning of 2nd c. A.D.

Christianity, introduced officially in 330 A.D., changed considerably the world view of the population. Their occupations though remained the same – sailors, fishermen, and craftsmen. The pagan temples were destroyed and in their place were built Christian churches. The number of the Christian churches from the Middle Ages found within the Old Town is 28 but most probably they were much more. In the neighboring town of Nessebar, where the Old town covers a smaller territory, the number of the churches discovered so far is 44. The situation in Sozopol (in terms of material resources and social composition) was not different. But the thickly built Sozopol doesn't allow archaeological excavations on large sites, as was the case in Nessebar until recently. Many pagan rituals characteristic of the





the farmers, who formed a large part of the population.

In the Middle Ages several monasteries appear near Sozopol. The largest and the most famous is no doubt the monastery St. Ivan on the Big island. The monastery had cloisters (small monasteries) – St. Nikola in the village of Chernomoretz, St. Mary Hrisotirisa on the Chervenka peninsula and St. Ivan the Devine in the Old town. Another monastery with patrons the saints Kirik and Yulita was situated on the island where today is built the military base. This monas-

ancient gods are masterfully included in the system of the new faith. Today their functions are taken over by the saints. Saint Nikola acquires the care for sailors and fishermen instead of Poseidon, Saint Triphon becomes the patron of the vine-growers instead of Dionysus, and Saint George and Saint Dimiter replace the Thracian horseman, being patrons of



tery also had a cloister – St. George near Cape Phoros in the bay of Bourgas. We read in an Emperor's charter of 1363 that the town had a monastery of the Armenians living in Sozopol, called Sacred Apostles. The Armenians were probably settled in Sozopol in the second half of 8th c., when they were moved from their native land to the Armenian mountains





in Thrace by Emperor Constantine Copronim. They were treated as a population for soldiers destined to defend the Byzantine border from the Bulgarians. They however pass over to the Bulgarians during the wars of Khan Kroum (803-814) and their commanders (strategists) were appointed to help Kavkhan Iratais, who had the task to defend Sozopol. A number of Sozopol citizens from all generations till 17th c., when the Turks destroyed all monasteries, became priests and had access to high learning, hidden in the rich monastery libraries. Some of them made a good carrier in the Church, being appointed as bishops of Sozopol. Two monks from Sozopol became patriarchs – Patriarch John XIII Kozma (1296-1303) and Patriarch Nil in 1382. The poets Constantine Disipat and John Komnin, also born in Sozopol, were monks in the monasteries of Sozopol too.

Very interesting, but much more diffi-

Olds house in Sozopol (19th c.)







Sozopol, the town beach – beginning of 20th c. (painter Hristopolis)

cult was the life of the citizens of Sozopol in the years of Turkish rule. For the population of Sozopol the rule of the Ottoman Empire was shorter – between 1453 and 1878. Due to its statute (personal domain of the Sultan and families with military duties) the population of Sozopol was purely Christian. Between 15th and 19th c. it consisted of 600 families, i.e. 4000-5000 people – the maximum that can be accommodated on the peninsula. The only Muslims were the town's governor and his family. And yet the religious and ethnic discrimination was clearly felt even in this purely Christian town. The people had to destroy their magnificent Mediaeval churches and a monastery, following the laws of the Empire, which didn't allow Christian churches to be higher than a Muslim on a horseback. From 1 May to 1 September a considerable part of the male population of the town had to do statute labor every year in a period of three centuries. On scaffoldings at the beaches they built war galleys for the Ottoman fleet. According to the Venetian ambassadors, the small compensation was that the people of Sozopol pilfered a large part of the building materials – beams, planks, nails and clamps, ropes and sails. The Christians had no right to possess arms and to be organized in a military militia. For that reason the town and the fishermen's settlements round it were often pillaged in the Ottoman period by Christian Cossack pirates and by the Lazi – Greeks from Asia Minor who had adopted Islam and lived round Trapezund (today Trabzon in Turkey). The Cossacks and the Lazi, in addition to robbing the population of Sozopol, also took captive young girls and women. The Ottoman administration never succeeded in preventing a pirate attack – there was no Turkish garrison in the





Old Sozopol (painter Hristopolis)

town and the heavy Turkish war galleys could catch the fast ore-ships of the pirates. The people of Sozopol, during the so-called violence of the Kurdzalii in the period 1786-1820 and during the War of Liberation, were allowed to bear arms by the Ottoman authorities. In both cases they defeated the Kurdzalii and the plundering bands of Circassians with their own hands.

Many features of the life in Sozopol in its 2610-year history may remain unknown, but we know almost everything about the rituals and the funeral traditions of the citizens of the town. Part of the population buried their dead near their houses outside the town or in their farms. This is why the vicinities of Sozopol, on a territory of 6-7 km round the town, are full of thousands of graves of citizens of Apollonia. Most of the citizens however buried the dead in the special necropolis (graveyard). In the small polis, where every square centimeter had the value of gold, the People's Assembly chose for a necropolis the beaches in the southern part of the town – today's town beach, the beach in Harmanite and the sand hills above the Kavatzite beach. These pieces of land were used for 300-350 years, the wind brought sand on the old graves and new ones were made on them. In the necropolis in the Harmanite quarter the graves are in seven successive layers, which today are 1 to 5-6 m deep. The nobility and the wealthy people of Apollonia of Thracian origin followed strictly the Thracian tradition to bury their dead under high mounds. Such burial sites with 15-20 mounds existed on the hill above the Old town (now destroyed), on St. Ilia Hill and at Cape Kolokita. There are individual large mounds also near the villages of Chernomoretz, Ravadinovo, the Alepu area and Mapite. The latter is the





Fishermen's alaman boats – beginning of 20th c. (painter Katerkov)

largest in the region of Sozopol and the soil covers a classical Thracian tomb with a corridor and two chambers, known from the architecture of the Kazanluk valley. Many Thracians however were buried by their relatives in the spots chosen by the authorities for graveyards.

The body of the diseased was put in a wooden coffin and laid in a grave dug in the sand, two meters deep. For a coffin were used (when the diseased was a baby or a child) large jars or amphoras. Sometimes the body of the dead was put in a grave built of large roof tiles. Very rarely the diseased was laid in a stone tomb, especially built for the purpose from large blocks of limestone, sometimes connected with iron clamps, covered with lead. In part of the burials (about 10%) the body was burned on a stake and the ashes and the small burned bones were laid in a stone or ceramic urn, put in a burial pit. There were tomb inscriptions on the burial places bearing the names of the diseased. The plates put by the relatives of the dead were limestone or marble rectangular pieces stuck in the stone base and attached with lead. They contain only the names of the diseased – personal and patronymic name. Sometimes, if the diseased came from a different town, the name of his place of birth was added. It is interesting that 90% of the tombstones contain the names of the wives. It





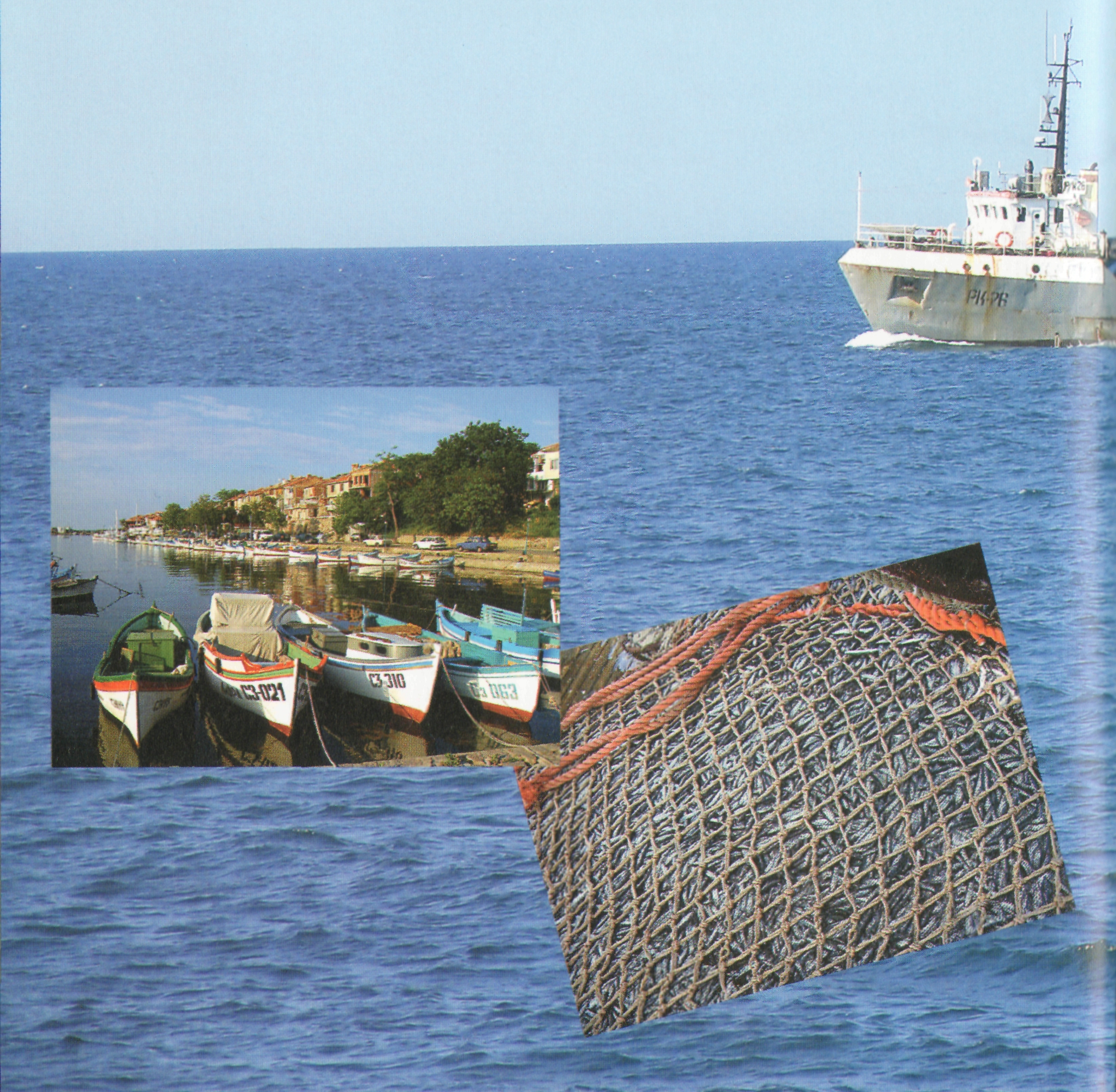
Fishing for mackerel, beginning of 20th c. (painter Katerkov)

seems that the Apollonians loved their wives very much. In the same way about 10 % of the names of wives are Thracian, which demonstrates one of the ways in which the Thracian ethnos enters a Greek town. When a citizen of Apollonia died in battle, the burial ceremony and the tombstone was paid by the state. A talented sculptor cut a relief of the diseased – armed, caressing his dog or in a scene of a burial feast. In addition to the name of the person killed in battle, the inscription on the tombstone said “From the People’s Assembly and the Council of Archons” (the Government).

Believing in after life (to reach the kingdom down under one must cross the River Styx paying the boatman Haron), they put a small copper coin in the mouth of the diseased. They also put ceramic vessels richly decorated with paintings – for the men these were wine vessels, for the women the vessels contained fragrant oils. None of the burial places contains gold or silver jewelry, decorations or coins. Even in the largest Thracian tombs in the mounds Kolokita and Mapite the burial gifts are identical with those in the poorest graves on the Harmanite beach – 3 ceramic vessels of the same type, probably bought from the same craftsman. Obviously Anaximandre, creating the codex of law of the polises, included in that of Apollonia too the rule, which forbade putting



expensive objects in the graves and especially gold and silver objects. This rule was valid for Millet too. “Gold and silver must serve the living” is the final wise sentence of the codex. What seems strange today is that this codex had been strictly followed for 900 years by the citizens of Apollonia – Greeks and Thracians. But there is no doubt that among the Greeks and the Thracians there were people of great wealth who could put as burial gifts kilograms of gold and silver vessels.





**In Christian times, following the norms of the religion, they stopped putting any burial gifts in the graves. The Christians of 19th c. had no particular plots for graveyards outside the town and they buried their dead in the churchyards even under the floor of the church. During the excavations round the churches Virgin Mary and St. George were found hundreds of Christian burials. Tombstones with inscriptions were put only in the early period of Christianity and they informed who the diseased was and how many years he had lived.**





# TOURIST SITES











## THE OLD TOWN

It is situated on the Skamni Peninsula, i.e. in the same place where the capital of ancient Apollonia and mediaeval Sozopol used to be. The territory of the ancient town was surrounded with fortress walls of which large fragments are preserved, especially along the southern coast of the peninsula where it is still preserved at a height of 3-4 m. This wall was built in the time of Emperor Anastasias (511). A rectangular tower is preserved near the Port administration.

More than 200 houses built between the middle of 18th and the beginning of 19th c. form the physiognomy of the Old Town. Most of them have two or three floors. The lower floors are almost always built for stores – to keep nets and other fishing inventory, agricultural instruments (primarily for vine growing), wine kegs. The house of Sozopol is a typically Bulgarian house that has analogues in the regions of the Balkan range and the Strandza Mountain. It has stone foundations and stone walls up to the first or the second floor. The structure





is of adobe walls and a slanting roof, covered with Turkish tiles. The adobe walls are covered with planks to protect the not well baked bricks from the disintegrating effect of rain.

There are no mediaeval churches preserved in the Old Town – they were destroyed by the Ottoman Turks in 15-19 c. In their place the Christian population built small chapels. Most of these are still there. Their number was 20. There are two chapels of St. Marina (patron of the

town), St. Dimiter, St. Paraskeva, St. Hristos. The rest of the chapels are dedicated to St. Atanas, Sts. Constantine and Elena, St. Nedelya, St. Mary Hrisomagriotisa, St. Evangelistra, St. Nikola, St. Galiniy, Holy Ascension, Holy Transfiguration, Holy Lifegiving source, The Holy Apostles, St. Ilia. Four large churches were also built on the ruins of mediaeval temples of 15-19 c. The oldest one, St. George, is situated in the center of the town and used to be a metropolitan church. Re-



cent archeological excavations show that the church of St. George was built on the southern part of an enormous early Christian basilica with a marble altar, erected immediately after 330 when Christianity was declared the official religion and existed till the 15th c., when destroyed by the Turks. In the foundations of the basilica are found several relieves of the Thracian horseman, which suggests that this was the place of an ancient temple

of the pagan Thracian deity. Iconography of the Thracian horseman and that of St. George is one and the same and in this case we have a typical example of a phenomenon characteristic of the imposition of Christianity in the first years after it became an official religion. This is the practice to introduce as patrons of Christian churches saints with iconographic image similar to that of the pagan deity, whose temple preceded the church.





The church St. Zosim is built in the park of the town, again in the place of a mediaeval temple. St. Zosim was considered to be a martyr of Sozopol (a Roman legionary, killed in 3rd c. for his Christian faith). He was really born in Sozopol, but the one situated in Pysidia (Asia Minor), which in antiquity was also called Apollonia. But in the Middle Ages the towns fought a silent battle for the honor of being the birthplace of

some saint and there is no doubt that the people of Sozopol in the Middle Ages have “appropriated” Saint Zosim, taking advantage of the identical names of the towns.

Most valuable in St. Zosim church are the icons painted by the most talented painter of Sozopol in the Revival period – Dimiter of Sozopol. He painted also the icons of churches in the town of Ahtopol and the village of Zidarovo.

A view of the Old Town





On the face wall of the temple St. Zosim there is a marble tombstone from 5th c. B.C. It belongs to the wife of an Apollonian citizen. The inscription states explicitly that the woman is from the town of Amphipolis (today ruins near Cavalla, Greece). Obviously the man from Apollonia met his wife when he was a young sailor and traveled round the world with his ship. Their love must have been strong if the tombstone contains so many details. Usually ancient tombstones contain only the name of the deceased.

Palicari – a rock on the northern coast

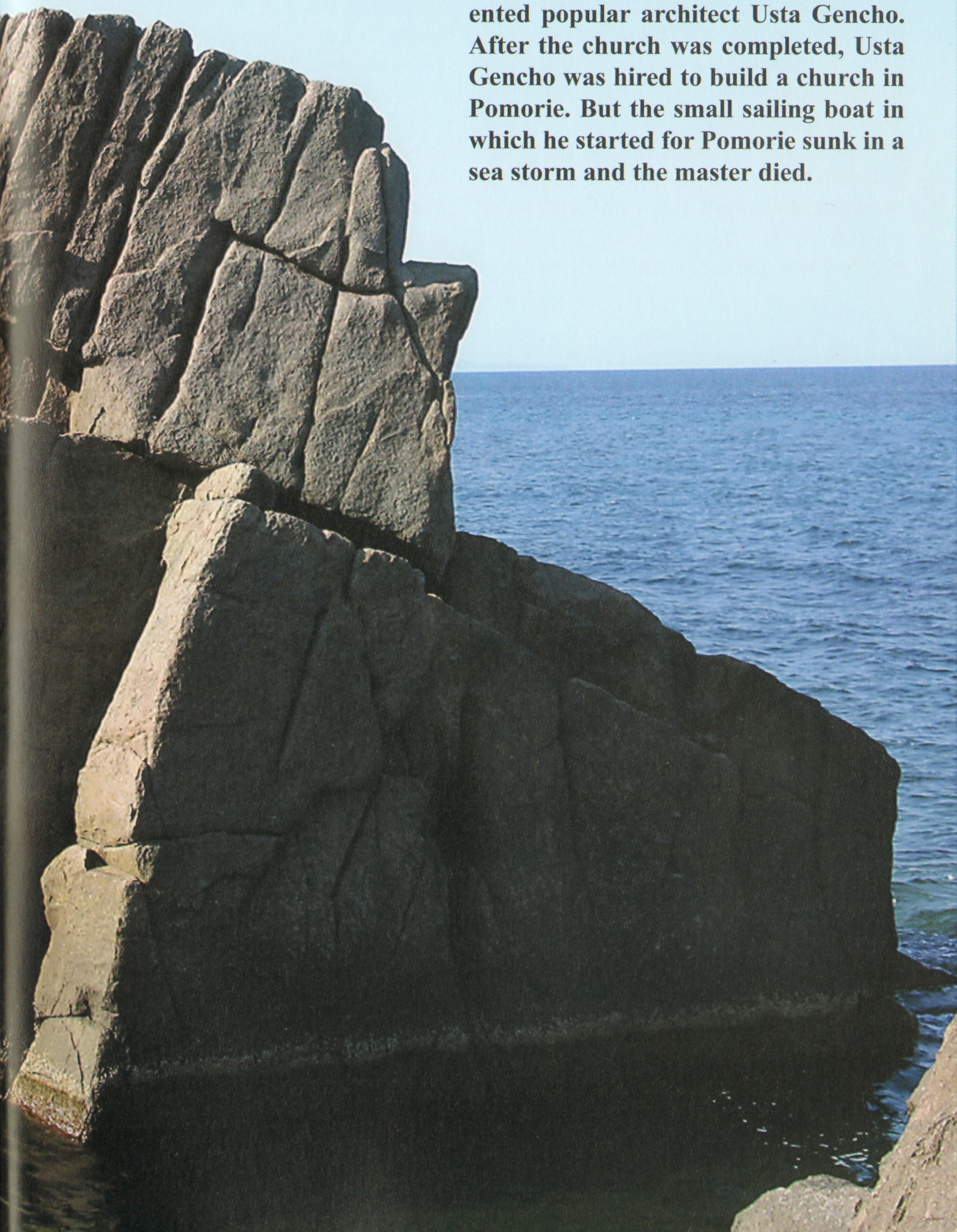
The church Virgin Mary is deeply set into the ground – such were the requirements of the Ottoman authorities in the end of 15th c., when it was erected in the place of an impressive mediaeval temple. The church is mentioned in a document of the patriarchate from 1482 as a cloister of the monastery on St. Ivan island. In 19th c. an exquisite iconostasis of wood engraving was set in the church. It was made by the famous masters from Debar, the West Macedonian region.

The Renaissance church St. Ivan the Divine was destroyed in the 1960s. The beautiful iconostasis is kept in the church Sts. Cyril and Methodius.





The fourth Sozopol church Sts. Cyril and Methodius was built by the Bulgarian population of the town in 1899. It is the last product of the talented popular architect Usta Gencho. After the church was completed, Usta Gencho was hired to build a church in Pomorie. But the small sailing boat in which he started for Pomorie sunk in a sea storm and the master died.





# THE ISLANDS ST. IVAN AND ST. PETER

The St. Ivan island has a territory of 660 decares and is the largest of the five islands along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. A narrow straight of a few meters separates it from St. Peter island with a territory of 4-5 decares. In antiquity the two islands were probably one territory. Between them and the continent there were two other islands called Milos and Gata, which are today under the water.

Today the St. Ivan island is not populated, covered with bushes and a small elm tree forest in the southwestern part. But it was not always like that. An ancient geographer writes that the Thracians, before the coming of the Greeks in the end of 7th c. B.C., had on an island against Sozopol a temple of a deity, which the Greeks identified with Apollo the Healer. The remains of this temple, built of large stone blocks without mortar near an old dead spring, with a pool cut into the rock, are still preserved today. The legend that a man stepping on one of





the protruding stones would increase his potency and a barren woman would get pregnant is still alive.

A few meters south of the Thracian temple an enormous temple of Apollo the Healer was built in the beginning of 5th c. B.C. The statue of the god was made of bronze by the great Greek sculptor Kalamis. 13 m and 20 cm high, it was one of the wonders of the world. By the images on coins we can have an idea of what the statue looked like. Apollo was presented naked, leaning on an olive tree. The statue was stolen by the Romans

during the invasion of the town by the legions of Mark Lucul. It was transported to Rome and put on Capitol Hill. In the Christian period the statue was destroyed by zealous Christians. Also destroyed in 330 was the temple of Apollo on St. Ivan island and in its place was built a large Christian church of St. Mary Kaleos ('The Good'). It seems that in antiquity and in early Middle Ages the island was permanently populated. Round and inside the church many graves of ordinary lay persons were found – men, women, and children. Two centuries later (5-6 c.)







**The islands St. Ivan and St. Peter from the air**

round the church was built a monastery and the lay population disappeared, moving inside the fortress walls of the well-protected town of Sozopol in 511. After 9th c. the monastery (then within the borders of the mediaeval Bulgarian state) turns into one of the most active centers of learning in Bulgarian lands. Books were created, others were translated from Greek – writings of respected religious authors.

In 1263 the Bulgarian military commander Michail Glava Tarhaniot (in those years in service to Byzantium) built a church dedicated to St. Ivan Precursor. The Patriarch of Constantinople Ivan Kozma, who was born in Sozopol, finds refuge in the monastery in 1303. In the next year, when the Bulgarian king Svetoslav Terter conquers back the Southern Black Sea coast, taken away from Bulgaria in 1263, Ivan Kozma becomes a Bul-





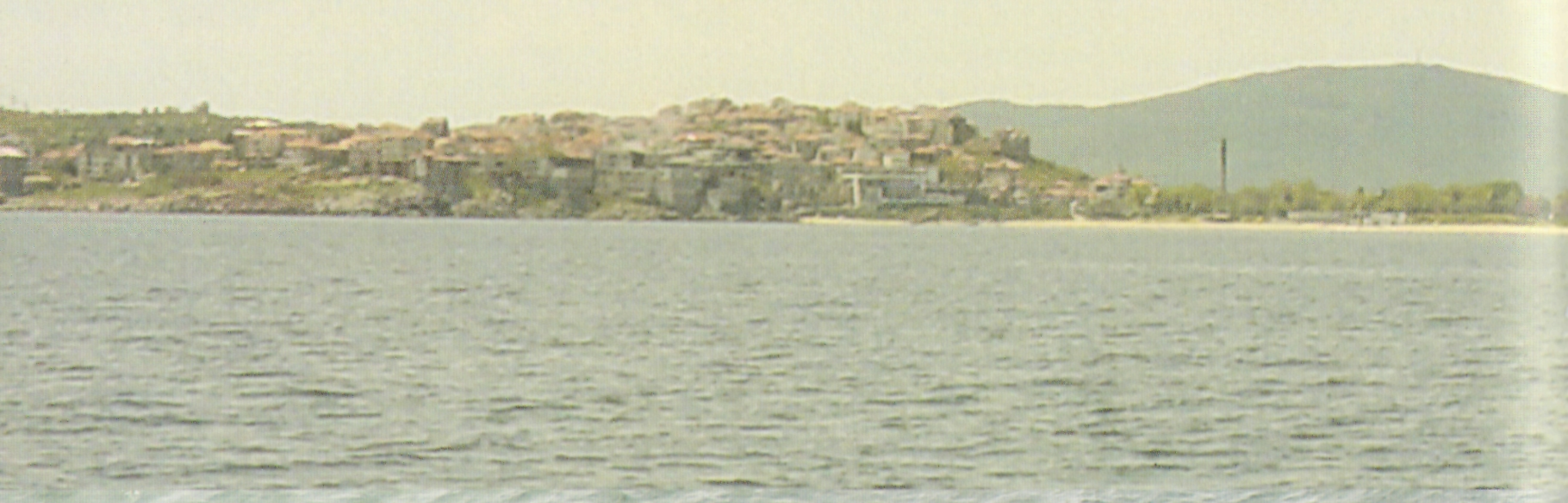


**garian diplomat and manages to arrange the marriage of Svetoslav Terter to the Byzantine princess Theodora. The church wedding was most probably held in the church St. Ivan of the monastery since it was pronounced “royal”, i.e. being under the protection of Bulgarian kings and later of Byzantine emperors. In 1363 the monastery receives a diploma from Emperor John V Paleolog, inscribed in gold, which confirms its land property in the area of the St. Nikola village (today’s Chernomoretz). It also confirmed the possession of the monasteries of St. Kirik and Yulita (on the island of that name, today connected with a quay with the continent). By the same gold-inscribed diploma the monastery receives as property also the monastery of the Armenians The Holy Apostles in Sozopol, which was probably situated in the area round the chapel of the same name.**

**Ruins of the monastery St. Ivan, 1263**







The monastery survived the Ottoman invasion and continued its life of an important center of literature and learning. Books created in that period (15-17 c.) are preserved in the library of the monastery Vatoped in Mount Athos, in the Vatican, in Moscow, Sofia, Athens, Michigan (USA), Upsala (Sweden). In 16th c. the monk Roussan founded a school in Sozopol. The monks led a life of true intellectuals, diverting thus from the strict monastic norms. Twice (in 1555 and 1565) they were punished by the Patriarchate in Constantinople because they were visited by women from Sozopol with whom the monks organized feasts and danced on the meadows near the monastery, and performed other deeds “unworthy of God”, as is written in the penal decrees of the Patriarchate. In 1623 the monastery was pillaged by a Cossack pirate fleet. It seems however that the monks managed to hide some valuable items since in a list of the property of the monastery of 1629 there are silver ritual vessels, presented by owners and captains of ships from Varna, Sozopol and Midia in 1601.

In June 1629 the monastery was again conquered by another Cossack fleet. Unexpectedly the Cossacks were attacked by 13 Turkish galleys, which destroyed the small ships of the pirates with artillery fire. About 200 Cossacks hid in the monastery and stayed eight days under siege. On the ninth day the Turkish squadron

was attacked by another Cossack fleet of 2000 Cossacks. It sunk two of the Turkish galleys and drove the rest away. The Cossacks took the men under siege with them and the Turkish authorities ordered that the monastery be destroyed so that it cannot serve as a refuge for the Cossacks. The monks, the library, the ritual vessels and the icons were taken to the Virgin Mary monastery on the Halki island







Sozopol seen from the island St. Ivan

in the Sea of Marmora. The monastery and the island were depopulated and on its ruins appeared a small chapel. Only in 1985 archeologists worked on part of it. Today one can see the remains of two churches, the library, the royal residence, part of the fortress wall with the entrance and a few of the monks' cells.

On the island of St. Ivan in 1884 a French engineer built a lighthouse. It in-

dicates the entrance to the Bourgas bay, where the largest Bulgarian port is today. By the present day lighthouse we can see parts of the marble steps of the ancient Roman lighthouse, built on the same spot in 2nd c. B.C.

During the Russian-Turkish War of 1828-1829, when Sozopol is turned for five months into a Russian fortress and a major base of the Black Sea fleet, on St. Ivan island existed a military hospital for the Russian soldiers sick with cholera. More than 600 Russians are buried on the island.

In addition to being a historic monument, the island St. Ivan is also a natural reserve. On the territory, on the rocks and by the waters of the island 72 species of birds make their nests. Three of these are included in the Red Book of the endangered species in the world and 15 in Europe. On the island live other rare biological species – the underground hare and the monk seal.







## **THE ST. MARINA CHAPEL**

**The St. Marina chapel is built in the bosom of the hills overgrown with trees near Sozopol. It is situated at 2 km off the Old Town, at about 200 m from the highway to Bourgas. In its present state the chapel was built in 1970, following old photos.**

**St. Marina is the most respected saint of Sozopol and for that reason the people of Sozopol have declared the day of the saint in the Orthodox calendar for a patron holiday of the town. Old citizens of Sozopol often see her in their dreams when the town is befallen by some disaster and she advises them what to do to get God's mercy. This strong cult for the saint seems strange at first glance – in a town of sailors and fishermen, where the strongest cult must be that of the patron St. Nicholas. What is more, in**



real life St. Marina was a small girl from a town far from the sea, in Asia Minor. She died as a martyr, killed by the Roman authorities for her Christian faith. The explanation lies in the fact, established by archeologists, that on the site of the chapel there are remnants of a pagan temple of the Thracians. It was probably dedicated to the Thracian-Greek goddess The Great Mother. Her iconographic image, which can be seen on murals from the island of Crete as early as the 2nd millennium B.C. (a young girl with a bunch of snakes), coincides with the iconographic image of St. Marina. She is depicted on icons either with snakes or defeating a dragon. In this case we have a rare case of continuity for more than 4000 years.

Near the chapel St. Marina there is an ancient maple tree on which the people of Sozopol leave pieces of cloth from their clothes. According to the legend (no doubt of pagan origin) with these piece one leaves there the illness that is torturing him. And by the rivulet near the chapel there is a fountain whose water, it is believed, has healing properties.

On the day of the saint every year the people organize a fair visited not only by the citizens of Sozopol but also by people from the neighboring villages of Ravadinovo, Chernomoretz, Rossen and Vesselie, where St. Marina is also deeply respected.







## KORENYATA

Korenyata is a small bay about 2 km off Sozopol, to the south. Its shores are high and steep, overgrown with figs, bushes and covered with evergreen ivy. In the inner most part there are two large springs of fresh water. On the northern part of the shore there is a high Thracian

mound, in which, according to archaeologists, in 5th c. B.C. was buried a prominent citizen of Apollonia of Thracian origin.

The springs in the Korenyata are known from antiquity. The Roman historian Pliny writes in his book *Natural History* that not far from Apollonia there is a small bay visited by ships sailing in the Black Sea to restore their supplies of fresh water.





Pliny writes that the bay is difficult to access and for that reason ships don't enter it but the sailors in boats fill kegs and amphoras with water.

Sozopol received water from these springs until 1926 when a new water supply system was build taking water from the area of Kavatzite. The water was brought to the town in barrels and kegs carried by donkeys. Each house in Sozopol kept in

the basement large ceramic vessels, which were filled with water. The people who transported the water were of a special profession - neropchii (from the Greek nero 'water'). The poor people in Sozopol of course brought their water themselves. The water in the old wells of Sozopol was not good for drinking and the ancient water supply installations were long forgotten.



# THE FIORDS

At 3 km from Sozopol, deep into the sea projects Cape Lolokita. Its grassy body is broken by ancient Thracian mounds. Ten of them were investigated by the French Consul in Bourgas in 19th c. From there tens of ancient painted vessels from 5th and 4th c. B.C. were taken to the Louver. They were in the tombs of Thracians, citizens of Apollonia, but buried according to the Thracian ritual. Still another mound was studied in the 1980s. In it was found a vessel with an inscription, which has not been deciphered yet.

The coastline of the peninsula is broken by the sea waves, which had formed several narrow bays with high rocky shores, resembling Norwegian fiords in miniature.



## KAVATZITE

Kavatzite is a wide bay at 4 km south of Sozopol, closed by capes St. Hristis and St. Agalina (Agia Lina, from Greeks St. Lina). In its northern part Cape St. Hristis closes the bay for the dangerous for the Black Sea northern and northeastern winds. The bay is calm even in most windy days. For that reason it was used as a refuge port by the ships sailing in the Black Sea in all periods. That is why the bottom of the bay in this part is covered with stone, lead and iron anchors, as well as with whole ceramic vessels or pieces of them from the pre-historic, ancient and mediaeval times.

On the shore of Cape St. Hristos, on private property, are situated the ruins of a mediaeval church, which gave the name to the seashore. It was destroyed by the Turks in 15th c. On them in the same period was built a small chapel.

The shore deep into the bay is covered with sand and is one of the most beautiful beaches in the Sozopol area. The wind has formed from the sand high dunes along the whole line of the shore. On them grows the plant "sand lily", which is found only here and on the sand

Kavacite from the air







dunes near Ropotamo River. All attempts to adapt the sand lily in other areas of the seacoast and in gardens failed.

In the northern part of the coast there are powerful springs. They were captured in antiquity by the Apollonians. Two water-supply systems of clay pipes took the water to the ancient town. During the invasions of the Barbarians the capture was destroyed and naturally restored in a modern form only in 1926. There are enormous poplars growing by the spring and they give the name of the bay (kavak, from Turkish `poplar`).

## ALEPU

A wide bay, surrounded by capes Agalina and St. Toma. Inside the bay is a sand beach, behind which the wind has also formed big dunes. Behind the dunes there is a vast lake, connected with the sea by a canal. The greater part of the lake is overgrown with reed. The lake is a place where migratory birds have rest, part of the bird route known under the name Via Pontica. Very often swans and other water birds from the enormous flocks, nesting in the Danube estuary, winter here.

Not far from Cape St. Toma, in the sea, there a tiny island, also called St. Toma, probably after the name of the Christian chapel, which is today in ruins. On the island, with territory of 3 decares, the king's botanist Buresh planted in the 1920s samples from the king's cactus collection. Today the cacti have occupied the whole surface of the island whose natural conditions are obviously very suitable. For that reason it is a natural reserve.



The island St. Toma





## **THE ESTUARY OF ROPOTAMO RIVER - ARKUTINO**

**The border between the municipalities of Sozopol and Primorsko goes along the Ropotamo River. The name of the river is of Greek origin and means 'border river'. This name originated of course in deep antiquity and is not the result of the present state of things. Historians claim that Ropotamo was a border**

**Water lily**





river between Bulgaria and Byzantium in the beginning of 9th c., after the victorious wars of Khan Kroum (803-814) that led to the annexation of large territories south of the Balkan Mountains to our state.

The Ropotamo River, in its lower reaches, is a “drowned river”, i.e. its bed is below sea level and at 5-6 km from its mouth fresh water from the springs and its tributaries mixes with the water of the sea. Its banks are swampy, overgrown with dense forests. The slopes of Strandza Mountain, among which the river makes its way, are covered with oak trees. The area of the river is not populated and nature has to a great extent preserved its initial virgin state. For that reason this area is a national reserve park.

Geologists claim that the Ropotamo River has changed its bed several times. From the old bed remained the small swampy lake Arkutino (Arkuda, from Greek ‘Bear’s swamp’), whose surface is covered with a rare plant species – the water lily. The lake is also a natural reserve.

The Ropotamo River is navigable. It is 6-8 m deep up to the bridge on the road Sozopol-Primorsko. The river is full of fresh water and sea fish. The coastline west and north of the river is sandy and forms enormous dunes – the largest along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. On the sand dunes grow sand lilies – a rare species.



Waters lily from the air





# THE ANCIENT FORTRESS MEDEN HILL

Meden Hill is a solitary mountain ridge, circling the fields and the downs near Sozopol. Its highest peak is 376 m above sea level, but viewed from the sea-coast the ridge is impressive. Meden Hill is thickly grown with oak trees, mixed with beeches and lime trees. Despite that the forest had been exploited for many centuries, it quickly restores itself. Today there are no bare spots on the slopes of Meden

cians had built in 13th c. B.C. strong fortresses on almost all peaks of the ridge.

The north most fortress is on peak Atia, which connects the ridge with the Black Sea. The fortress is made of stone blocks without mortar (a typically Thracian manner of construction). In 7th c. B.C. settlers from Millet, according to a mediaeval author, try to settle here but the place didn't appeal to them and they moved to live on today's Sozopol Peninsula. It seems that part of the settlers had remained in Atia since during excavations by the fortress findings from 6th c. B.C. were discovered – arrow-coins and an archaic sculpture of a young man. Atia



Hill and at places the thick “mladinyak” (young forest) creates an impenetrable jungle.

In the Meden Hill there are mighty veins of copper also containing silver. The ore has been processed from the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C. till the end of 20th c. when it became unprofitable and the mines were closed. The land round it are recultivated with money from EU funds.

Meden Hill was a natural fortress protecting the fields round Sozopol against any invader by land from all directions. That is why the Skirmian Thra-

still exists as a small settlement today. The fortress today is not accessible for visitors because it is within the territory of a military base.

## A FORTRESS ON THE BAKURLUKA PEAK

The fortress Bakurluka (Turkish ‘hill of copper’) is situated on the highest peak (376 m) of the Mountain ridge. It is made of stone blocks without mortar and surrounds 4 decares round the peak.



From the stone platform on the peak one can watch easily the bays of Bourgas and Sozopol, the islands, the peninsulas, the bays and the fields around Sozopol. There is also a visual link with all peaks of Meden Hill, on which the Thracian fortresses are built.

Round the fortress, which is today in ruins, there are also other buildings and constructions from ancient times, including dolmens – ancient Thracian tombs, built above ground from enormous stone blocks weighing 1-2 tons. Archeological excavations on the peak have not been made and today it is difficult to determine exactly the function of these

leads to the conclusion that they belong to ancient metallurgy whose unsophisticated technology of melting the ore didn't allow complete extraction of the metal. And yet the Thracians of Apollonia produced from here large quantities of metal, which allowed them to cast gigantic bronze statues for the temple of Apollo and of respected native and foreign citizens.

With its fascinating nature and the mysteries of an ancient fortress and settlement, Bakurluka is an attractive tourist site. Particularly beautiful is Bakurluka in early spring when thousands of lilac and lime trees blossom, cutting through the thick oak forests.



Meden Hill seen from the Old Tawn

constructions. What is more, the peak and the whole of Meden Hill are thickly covered with oak trees. Most probably a big village was situated on the peak, built outside the fortress walls, a village of miners and metal workers. Up to 6th c. it belonged to the Skirmian Thracians and then became part of the state territory of Apollonia. In confirmation of this hypothesis comes the fact that very close to Bakurluka there stood enormous (up to 150 000 tons) piles of slag (remains of the ore after processing). The Russian archeologist Chernih writes that it contained up to 20% unprocessed copper. This

## THE LOBODOVO STRONGHOLD

The small fortress is built on a peak, south of Bakurluka and flanks a saddle that cuts Meden Hill. Along it passed the route from Apollonia to Enos, in the mouth of the Maritza River. The fortress is the smallest among the fortifications on Meden Hill (1.5 decares) and is also built of blocks of stone without mortar. On the slopes round the fortress there are hundreds of small stone mounds 1 m high – burials of ancient people living in these parts.



# THE SMALL STRONGHOLD

The fortress is built on a peak, 3-4 km off the Lobodovo stronghold. The wall is made of stone blocks without mortar. In it are masterfully included the enormous moraines 7-8 m high, sprinkled on the peak by nature. The entrance is also cut between two large moraines.

50 m south of the fortress, on the mild slope of the hill, there are several Thracian mounds and a well preserved cir-

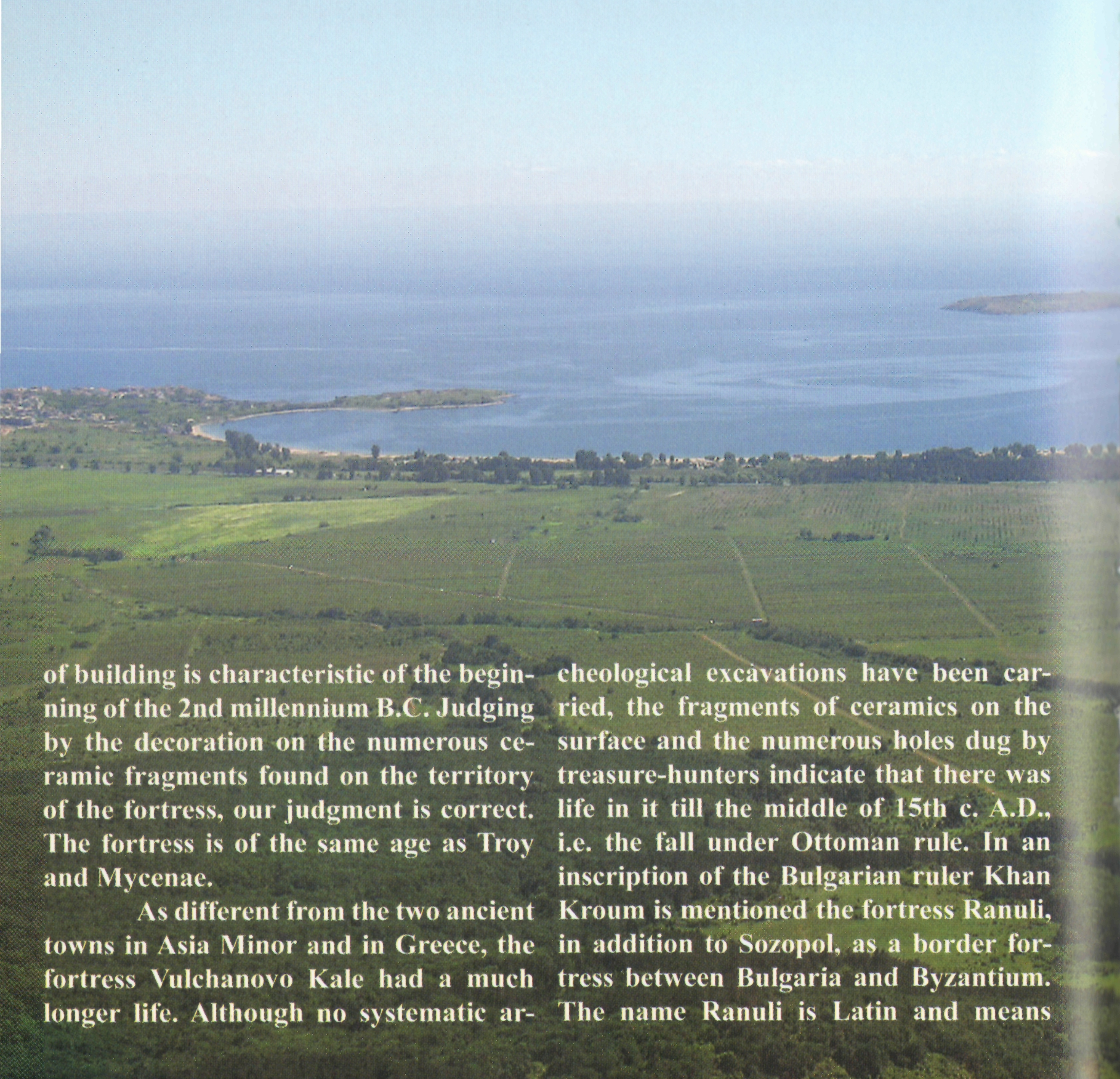
cle of large round stones (no doubt a primitive temple of the Sun from the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C.). This suggests that the Small stronghold is the capital center of the Skirmian tribe. Here resided the Thracian kings and were buried in the big mounds. On the northern slope of the hill there are hundreds of stone mounds – burials of ordinary Thracians.

The Small stronghold is the only fortress on Meden Hill, in which in 1974-1975 were carried archeological excavations. It was established that the fortress was built in 13-12 c. B.C., i.e. in the times of the Trojan War. The settlement existed

of building is characteristic of the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C. Judging by the decoration on the numerous ceramic fragments found on the territory of the fortress, our judgment is correct. The fortress is of the same age as Troy and Mycenae.

As different from the two ancient towns in Asia Minor and in Greece, the fortress Vulchanovo Kale had a much longer life. Although no systematic ar-

cheological excavations have been carried, the fragments of ceramics on the surface and the numerous holes dug by treasure-hunters indicate that there was life in it till the middle of 15th c. A.D., i.e. the fall under Ottoman rule. In an inscription of the Bulgarian ruler Khan Kroum is mentioned the fortress Ranuli, in addition to Sozopol, as a border fortress between Bulgaria and Byzantium. The name Ranuli is Latin and means





about 2000 years and was deserted by its population in the beginning of 6th c. A.D. when the Balkan Peninsula was invaded and conquered by the Slavs. They probably retreated to the well-fortified and protected town of Sozopol.

In some of the moraines on the peak there are small pools cut by the Thracians. They are connected by furrows. These are remains of ancient temples, in which offerings were performed. By the fortress stands a fountain with cold water and the woods are full of wild animals – deer, does, the wild bore, hares, jackals, wild goats.

## THE FORTRESS VULCHANOVO KALE

The fortress Vulchanovo Kale is built on a peak, on the southern banks of the Ropotamo River. In Modern times it is known as The Lion's Head. The hill is made of enormous moraines and the peak is surrounded by precipices. There is access to the peak only from the east, through a narrow saddle, which is crossed by a strong fortress wall built of large pieces of stone. This megalithic manner

Sozopol seen from the fortress Bakurluka

'frogs' fortress'. The fact that at that time the Ropotamo River was the border between Bulgaria and Byzantium and the semantics of the name (there are really too many frogs in the river) lead to the conclusion that the fortress mentioned in Kroum's inscription with the name Ranuli is in fact Vulchanovo Kale. The name has survived in its Greek analogue Vatrohi as the name of the port bay of the fortress.

From the Middle Ages we have remains in the fortress of a small church, situated on the only level plate on the hill, in its part that hangs over the Ropotamo River.

The name Vulchanovo Kale comes from a local legend that the fortress was the hiding place of the Strandza voivode Vulchan, who fought against the Turks.

The Vulchanovo Kale hill and the



ruins of the ancient fortress are included in the national reserve park Ropotamo and are situated in wild natural environment untouched by human hand. Access to the fortress is very difficult and is possible only for tourists in excellent physical condition.

## THE HERSONES FORTRESS

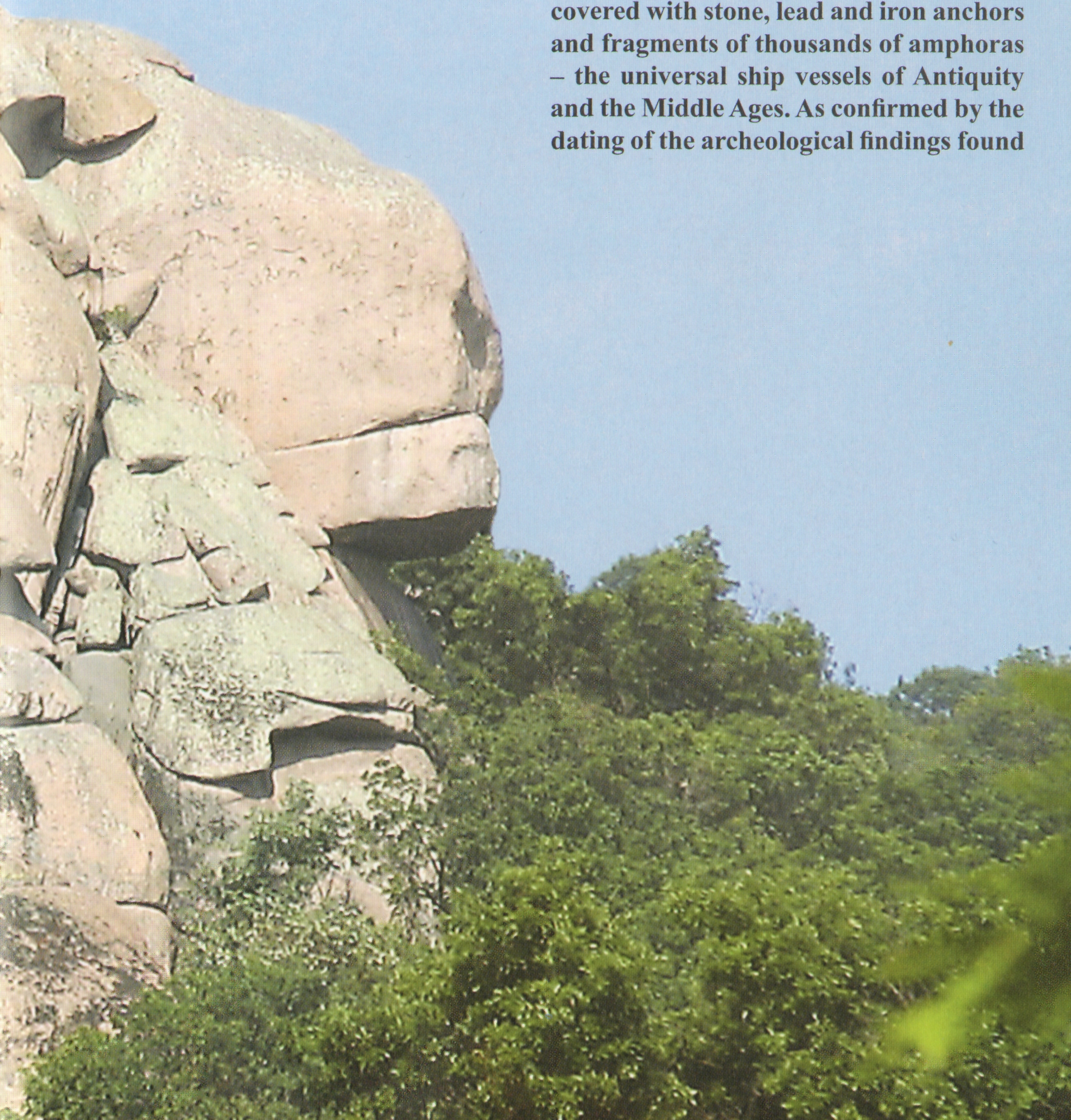
The fortress is built of stone blocks without mortar on the narrow isthmus of Cape Maslen (the largest sea





peninsula on the Bulgarian coast). The name is Greek, means 'peninsula' and is mentioned by several ancient geographers. But the fortress, as its manner of construction shows, was built before the coming of the Greeks to this coast. In a traveling description the distance from

Apollonia to the station Tera corresponds to the distance to Cape Maslen and we must accept that the Thracian name of the fortress was Tera and was used parallel with the Greek name. The fortress Tera (Hersones) is situated on a spot of exceptional strategic importance – Cape Maslen is the end of the catenary of Meden Hill. In the lee side of the long sea cape was formed a port basin, well protected from the dangerous winds in the Black Sea. The bottom south of Cape Maslen is covered with stone, lead and iron anchors and fragments of thousands of amphoras – the universal ship vessels of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. As confirmed by the dating of the archeological findings found





on the sea bottom, Hersones, as a settlement and a port, existed till the middle of 15th c. During the invasion of the Ottoman Turks in the middle of 15th c. the settlement is deserted, as is the whole region to the north. The ruins of the settlement are now covered by the forests of the Strandza Mountain. Not far from the fortress, on the shore, deep into bay St. Paraskeva, we have the ruins of a beauti-

ful cross-domed church of 10th c. Due to the physico-geographical peculiarities of the Black Sea, in summer, from the end of March till the beginning of June, until the 1960s, enormous shoals of mackerel passed by Cape Maslen. The fish came from the Aegean Sea and migrated towards the estuaries of the big rivers in the northeastern part of the Black Sea – the Danube, the Dnestar, the Don, and

### The Ropotamo River

250-300 tons of mackerel and were considered to be the most profitable stationary fishing spots in Sozopol. After the end of the 1960s, mackerel nor longer passes by these shores. Ancient historians claim that in antiquity too mackerel disappeared from these waters for periods of 25-30 years.

The heavily broken coastline round Cape Maslen turns it into one of the most picturesque spots on the Black Sea coast.

## THE FOREST UNDER WATER

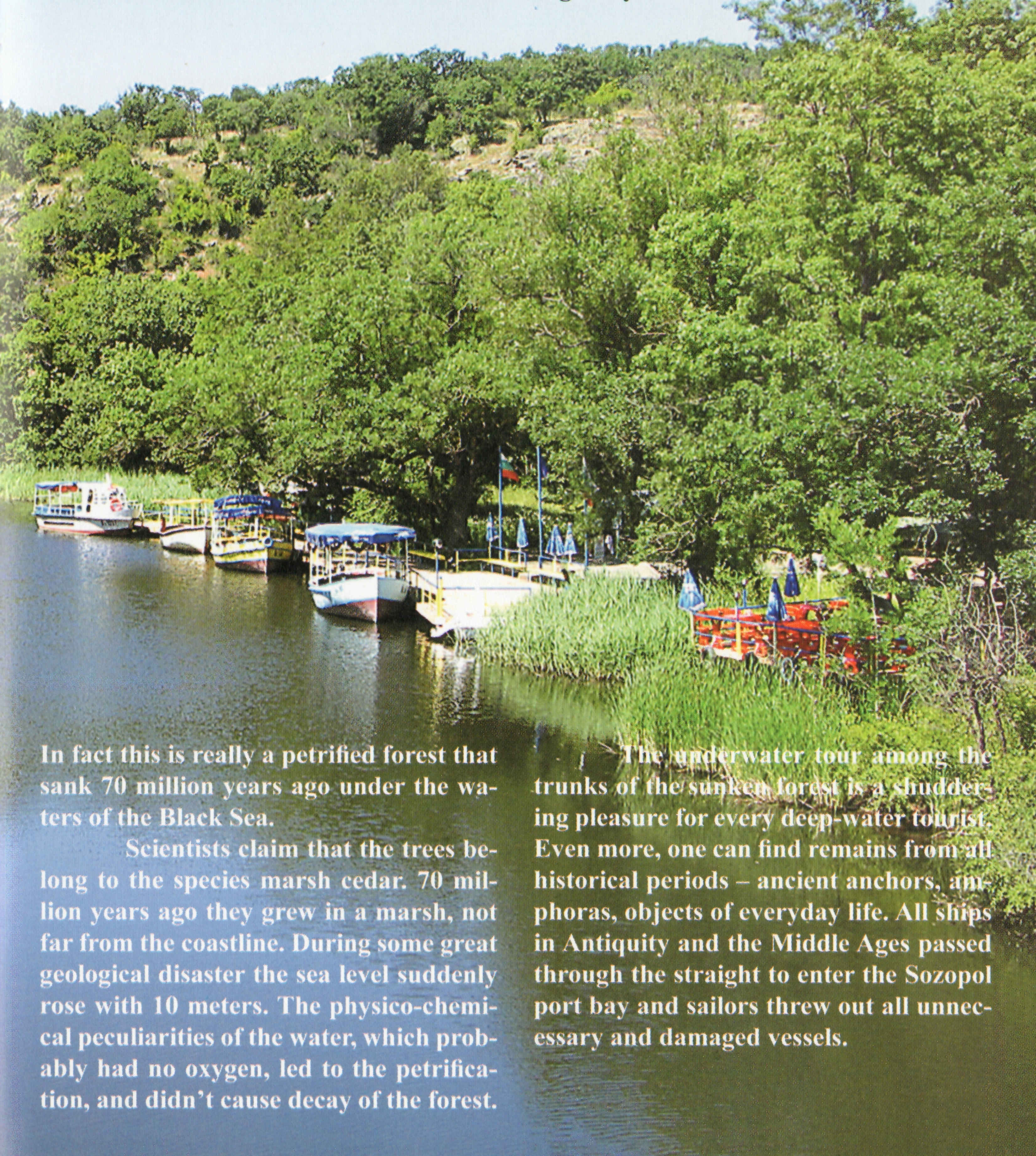
In the straight between Kirik and Yulita island and the island St. Ivan, 12-17 m deep, the bottom is level and covered with sand. Suddenly, before the divers rise somber stone columns, 4-5 m in diameter. They are hundreds and create the impression that the diver has found himself in an apocalyptic ancient forest.



the Dnepar. The shoals of fish fed on the large biological mass brought by the rivers and in autumn again migrated to the Aegean Sea to winter in its warm waters.

In the waters along Cape Maslen fishermen from Sozopol arranged since ancient times stationary fishing installations to catch the spring mackerel. They dried it and ate it or sold it on the market under the name "chiroz". The installa-

tions called "dalyan" are several hundred meters long and represent a complex construction of long straight pieces of timber stuck in the bottom. The nets stretched on them form a clever trap. The dalyans from the estuary of the Ropotamo River to Stomopulo were: Kendinar, Floru, St. Paraskeva, Kopur (on Cape Maslen itself), Palyurya, Kondros and Chehru. In a good year these dalyans caught up to



In fact this is really a petrified forest that sank 70 million years ago under the waters of the Black Sea.

Scientists claim that the trees belong to the species marsh cedar. 70 million years ago they grew in a marsh, not far from the coastline. During some great geological disaster the sea level suddenly rose with 10 meters. The physico-chemical peculiarities of the water, which probably had no oxygen, led to the petrification, and didn't cause decay of the forest.

The underwater tour among the trunks of the sunken forest is a shuddering pleasure for every deep-water tourist. Even more, one can find remains from all historical periods – ancient anchors, amphoras, objects of everyday life. All ships in Antiquity and the Middle Ages passed through the straight to enter the Sozopol port bay and sailors threw out all unnecessary and damaged vessels.



## THE ISLANDS MILOS AND GATA

Again in the straight between St. Peter island and the cape of Sozopol, under the water, are the remains of two islands. On some ancient maps they are marked with the names Milos and Gata (Milos, from Greek `mill`; Gata, from Italian `cat`). Exactly when and for what reasons the islands sank under water is a mystery. In 1884 the Bulgarian Minister of Education Konstantin Irechek describes them as low rocks, hardly seen above water. But today the rocky body of the islands is at 11 m depth, with depth of the sand bottom 22 m.

The rocky body of the islands is broken by numerous canyons, chaotically situated rocks form strange figures. Innumerable rock fishes have settled in the underwater reef – sting rays and sea foxes, rock

The Ropotamo River

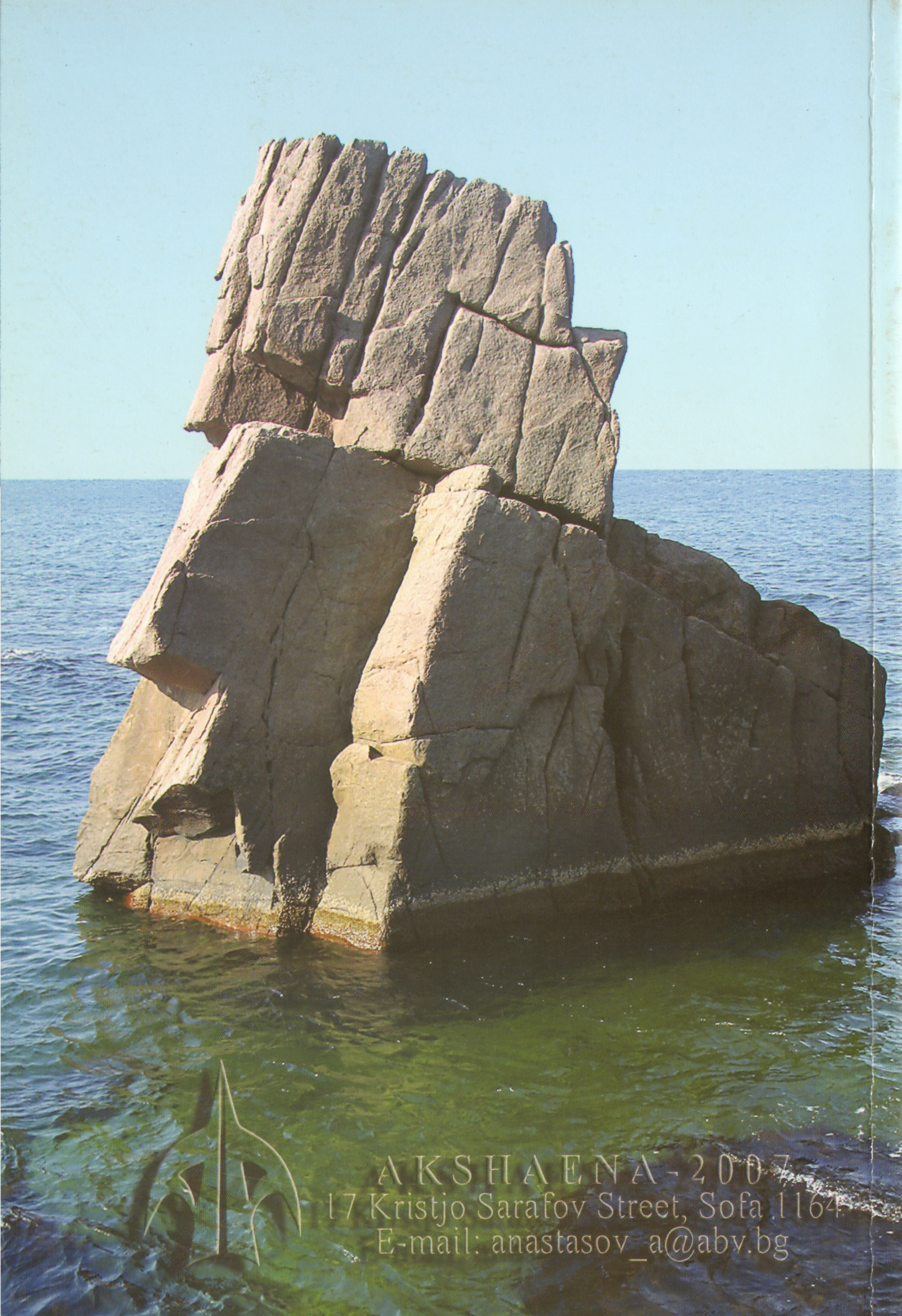




golden gray mullets, sparrows, turbot, goby fish, lapina. They give life to the mysterious seascape. When the islands were above water, they closed for the dangerous Black Sea winds the whole strait between St. Ivan island and the continent and turned it into a comfortable port basin. The numerous stone, lead and iron anchors, found in the lee part of the sunken islands, indicate that this was the second port of Apollonia, mentioned by ancient authors. By the way, archaeologists have still much work to do on the bottom round the sunken islands and underwater tourists can have curious encounters with monuments of ancient sea faring.







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